



The Portraiture of the Reverent M<sup>r</sup> John  
Nalton Late Preacher at S<sup>t</sup> Lenards Easter lane

# G O D S

Great care of his

## GOOD PEOPLE

I N

## BAD TIMES.

Discovered in several

# SERMONS

Preached by

## M<sup>r</sup> JAMES NALTON

(Late Minister of S<sup>t</sup> Leonards Foster-Lane) immediately upon his return out of *Holland* about Twelve years since.

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Published by J. F. Teacher of Short-Writing, who took them in Characters from the said M<sup>r</sup> J. Nalton.

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Rom. 8.28. *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*

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L O N D O N,

Printed by A. M. for Nathanael Webb at the Royal Oake near the Little North-Door of S<sup>t</sup> Pauls. M. D. C. L X V.







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TO THE  
READER.

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READER;



*Shall give thee  
onely this brief  
account of these  
Sermons and of  
their Authour.*

*Mr James Nalton, who was  
whilest he lived a painfull la-  
bourer in the Lords vineyard,  
and now (I doubt not) a blessed  
Saint in Heaven, there reaping*

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## To the Reader.

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the fruits of his labours: Being about twelve years since lookt upon with an evil eye by some then in power, did (by advice of friends) prudently withdraw himself for a time into Holland, to avoid impending dangers. Immediately upon his return unto London he preached these Sermons, being as 'tis very probable some of the fruits of his studies whilst in another Country: his chief scope and design in them is, to set forth Gods singular care of his own people in sad and sinfull times. How well this hath been performed by him, and how pious and practical, and in many respects very usefull these Sermons are, I had much rather the Reader should finde by his own perusal, than be informed by any thing that I can say of them. And let me adde this for his encouragement; that I have not here published

## To the Reader.

lished onely some shreds and fragments of Sermons, as hath been the too common ( though not commendable ) practise of some ( and those also so moulded and model'd by them, that very little either of the method or stile of those whose Works they have pretended to publish could be discerned in them ) these Sermons being here presented to the view of the Reader so as delivered by the Authour, excepting onely a paring off of some repetitions, which though they may have their good use in preaching, yet not so in printing, preaching and printing very much differing, not but that the Reader may possibly espy some faults in these Sermons ( though I presume none very material ) which if he should, I have onely this just request to make to him, that he would ( as there is great reason he should )

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To the Reader.

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*impute them to the Transcriber  
or Printer, but not to the Au-  
thour.*

J. F.

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GODS



# G O D S

great care of  
his good People  
in bad Times.

Jeremiah Chap. 24. Verse 5.

*Thus saith the Lord, the God of  
Israel, Like these good Figs, so will  
I acknowledge them that are car-  
ried away captive of Judah, whom  
I have sent out of this place into the  
Land of the Caldeans for their good.*



These words are part  
of a Vision which  
the Prophet saw,  
concerning Judah  
and Jerusalem. The  
time when the Pro-  
phet saw this Vision, appears in the

A 5

first.



first Verse of this Chapter, to be after *Nebuchadnezzar* had carried away *Jechoniah* King of *Judah*, and the Princes, and a great multitude with them into *Babylon*. The occasion of this Vision was this, namely to comfort and support the fainting drooping spirits of these poor captives, who because they saw many of their brethren left in the Land of *Judah*, enjoying their liberty and their inheritances, when themselves were now under captivity, disinherited, stript of all their enjoyments, and cast into a strange Land, were hereupon exceedingly discouraged, and began to have their hearts sink in despondency and despair: God now by this Vision of two Baskets, one of good Figs, and another of bad Figs, would let them see, that however in the eye of sense, those that were left in the Land of *Judah* seemed to be more happy, and those that were carried captive into *Babylon* seemed to be more miserable; yet those that were left in the Land of *Judah* were bad Figs, and therefore God would send the sword, the famine,



famine, and the pestilence amongst them, that should consume them from off the good Land; their end would be very miserable, as it is in the last Verse of the Chapter. And on the contrary, though they that were carried away captive seemed to be very miserable for the present, yet they were the good Figs, and therefore their end would be very blessed, according to the words that I have now read unto you; Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Like these good Figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the Land of the Caldeans for their good.

In this Text then there are these two branches observable;

First, We have the Author of a comfortable Message.

And secondly, We have the Message it self.

The Author of the comfortable Message is the Lord; who is described here by the interest he had in, and the relation he had unto his people; he is called the God of Israel.

Secondly,

#### 4 Gods great care of his good People

Secondly, We have the Message it self. And herein take notice of two particulars;

First, The explication of a Type.

Secondly, The application of it to these poor captives.

The explication of a Type in these words, *Like these good Figs*; by which the Lord shews the Prophet *Jeremiah*, what was meant by the Basket of good Figs.

And then we have the application of this Type to these poor captives; and the application is wholly comfortable, and the comfort it yeelds consists in three particulars.

First, God doth here promise them, that he would *acknowledge them*, and own them in a strange Land.

Secondly, The Lord tells them that he himself did send them into the Land of the *Caldeans*.

And thirdly, He doth assure them that this transportation or carrying into Captivity, should be for their profit and advantage: *I have sent them out of this place into the Land of the Caldeans for their good.*

We

We will begin with the first branch of the Text, and that is the Author of this comfortable Message, *the Lord*; described here by his relation unto his people, he is called *the God of Israel*.

But here it may be demanded, Why doth God stile himself by the name of *the God of Israel*, in this comfortable Message that he sends to these poor captives?

I answer, He doth it for this end, namely, to let them know, that though he seemed to cast them off from being his people, because he had now suffered them to be carried captive into a strange Land, yet he was the God of *Israel* still, and that they were even then under his fatherly care, and he had a tender regard unto them.

The Observation then which I would commend to you from hence, (that God calls himself *the God of Israel*, even at this time when *Israel* was carried into captivity) is this;

*That God doth not cast off his people, even then when he seems to cast them off.---God is not regardless of his people,* Doct.

people, when he seems to be regardless of them.

To prove this Doctrine to you, there are these two branches that I must make plain:

First, That God doth sometimes seemingly cast off his people.

But then secondly, That God doth not, will not, cannot, really cast them off.

First, I must prove that God doth sometimes seemingly cast off his people. He sometimes seems to be so regardless of them, and of their condition, as if he had set them at a sad distance from his love. Thus it was with these poor captives here in the Text, that were carried away into Babylon with King *Jedoniah*, and the Princes. And thus you shall see the Church complains, *Psal. 10. 1. Why standest thou afar off O Lord, why hidest thou thy self in times of trouble?* And thus *David* complains, *Psal. 13. 1. How long wilt thou forget me O Lord for ever, how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?* And thus *Job* complains, *Job 13. 24. Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and holdest*

holdest me for thy enemy. And thus the Prophet Jeremiah complains, Lam. 3. v. 8, and 44. Also when I cry and shout he shutteth out my prayer, and thou hast covered thyself with a cloud that our prayer should not pass through.

But you may say, Why doth God sometimes seem to cast off his own people?

I answer: He doth it for these reasons:

First, God would hereby teach *Reas. 1.* us to live by faith, and not by sight and sense only: if there were no tryals, if there were no desertions not temptations, there would be no exercise of faith at all: but now when a people can against hope believe in hope, that is, against hope of sense, can believe in hope of the Promises, and can depend upon God at that time when he seems to cast them off, and can hang upon the Promises as the earth is said to hang upon nothing, this is the life, Job 26. 7. this is the efficacy of faith indeed.

Secondly, God doth it, to teach *Reas. 2.* his people to reflect upon and be sensible

sensible of their unkindness in turning their backs upon him, and that therefore it were just with him to turn his back upon them for ever.

*Reas. 3.* Thirdly, God doth it for this end, to teach his people how to prize his presence at a higher rate, that he may indeer the mercy of his perpetual abode: imprisonment makes liberty so much the sweeter, and war (we know) makes peace so much the sweeter; and health is most wellcome when it brings with it recommendation from sickness. If it were with us as it is in *Greenland*, or with those that live farre Northward, that we should enjoy the light of the Sunne but onely for five or six moneths in the year, how welcome would the Sunne be to us then: so Gods hiding away his face sometimes, makes his presence the sweeter and the more welcome to us.

*Reas. 4.* And then fourthly, God sometimes seems to desert his people, that they may not desert him; for should we alwayes enjoy the smiles of his face, we should quickly grow proud.



proud and wanton, and should cease to seek him so early as otherwise we would do; and therefore God deals with us as the Nurse doth that hideth her self from her Childe, to make the Childe cry after her; so God sometimes leaves us, that we may seek him the more earnestly, and follow him the more closely.

*Hos. 5. 15. I will goe and returne to my place (saies God) till they acknowledge their offences and seek my face, in their affliction they will seek me early.* 'Tis true indeed, our comfort consists in communion with God; for if he hide his face from us the steps of our strength are streightned; bur yet this is as true, that while we live here upon earth, we can never enjoy a full and constant communion with our God, because there is a mixture of corruption with grace. We are in a mixt condition here below, it is neither night nor day with us, but partly night Zech. 14. and partly day, and as long as we<sup>6.</sup> are in a mixt condition, so long we have need of a mixt manifestation.

Fifthly and lastly, God doth *Reas. 5.*  
sometimes



sometimes seemingly cast off his people, and doth desert us that he may not desert us; I mean God doth sometimes desert us in our temporal comforts, that he may not desert us in our spiritual comforts; and God sometimes deserts us in our spiritual comforts, that he may not desert us in our spiritual graces; and he deserts us sometimes in one grace, that he may not desert us in another grace; as for example, God sometimes deserts us in prayer, that he may strengthen the grace of humility: in a word, God deserts us for a while, that he may not desert us for ever; God deserts us in a little wrath, that he may not desert us in everlasting wrath, that wrath that burns in hell to all eternity. Thus you have the first branch of the Doctrine opened to you, *That God doth sometimes seemingly cast off his people.*

But now secondly, *God doth not, will not really cast off his people; though they may be sometimes cast down, yet they are never cast off, and though they may be dejected, yet*

yet they shall never be rejected; and though they may be left for a while, yet they shall never be cast away.

*Isa. 41. 8, 9.* But thou art Israel my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, I have chosen thee and not cast thee away. And *Isa. 44. 21.* Remember these O Jacob and Israel, for thou art my servant I have formed thee, thou art my servant O Israel thou shalt not be forgotten of me. True indeed, the righteous, that is Gods own people may sometimes say, the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me, as it is *Isa. 49. 14.* But see what God answers, *v. 15, 16.* Can a woman forget her sucking Child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb, yea they may forget, yet will not I forget thee; behold I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands, thy walls are continually before me. Take but one Scripture more, and it is a full Scripture, *Jer. 31. 36, 37.* If those ordinances (of the Sun, Moon, and Stars) can depart from before me saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever:

*Thus*

Thus saith the Lord, if heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth be searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done saith the Lord: But that can never be, the ordinances can never be changed, (saith God) therefore I will never cast off my People. And would you know the reasons of this second branch of the doctrine, I shall give you these four briefly.

*Reas. 1.*

The first is drawn from the immutability of Gods Council, *the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his.* 2 Tim. 2. 19. Gods great design, the council he had in his bosom before the world began, it was to save his Elect. Now saith God, my council shall stand.

*Reas. 2.*

The second may be drawn from the unchangeableness of his love; *I have loved thee* (saith God) *with an everlasting love,* Jerem. 31. 3. *and the gifts, and calling of God are without repentance,* Rom. 11. 29. He speaks of those gifts that flow from election and from effectual calling, these

these gifts God never repents of, though he may repent of the common gifts he bestows upon hypocrites.

But here it may be objected; May not the sins of Gods own people cause him sometimes to repent?

I answer, No. True indeed the sins of Gods people may hinder the manifestation and the discoveries of his love, and may cause a fatherly displeasure in him towards them, but they cannot utterly take away his love: as the undutifullness of a son to his father, may cause his father to hide his face from him, but yet he doth not disinherit him or cast him off: as all our sins when they were laid upon Christs back, could not take away Gods love from him then, so neither shall they take away his love from us now, especially when by the blood of his son they are purged away.

The third Reason may be drawn *Reas. 3.*  
from the stedfastness of Gods Covenant, and the Promises wrapt up in it. *2 Sam. 23. 5. Although my house be not so with God: though my family*

Hebr. 10.  
23.

family hath not been rightly ordered, and though my politicall government hath had many failings in it as I have been a King and a Magistrate, yet (saith David) he hath made with me an everlasting Covenant ordered in all things, and sure, for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow: though I should break Covenant with God, God will not break Covenant with me: God (you must know) is free in promising and faithfull in performing, and if we believe not, yet he abideth faithfull, he cannot deny himself, 2 Tim. 2. 13. God can as soon cease to be God as cease to be a faithfull God; it is an act of mercy in God to promise, but having promised, 'tis then an act of justice for God to performe what he hath promised.

Fourthly, God works the hearts of his people so that they shall adhere and cleave to him, and not forsake him: now where God sees a poor sinner unwilling to forsake him, God is as unwilling to forsake the sinner: What (saith God) wilt thou

thou keep close to me, and cleave to me still, and hang upon me though I seem to cast thee off, why then if thou doest thus cleave to me I will cleave to thee, *I will never leave thee nor forsake thee*, Heb. 13. 5. In which place, it is well observed, there are no less than five negatives, *I will* <sup>Οὐ μὴ οὐ</sup> *not*, *I will not*, *I will not*, *I will ne-* <sup>αὐτῶ, ἵδ' ἔ</sup> *ver*, *never leave thee nor forsake thee.* <sup>μὴ οὐ ἐγ-</sup> <sup>νοησάτι-</sup> <sup>πω.</sup>  
So you see now the Point proved to you in both the branches of it; First, *That God doth sometimes seemingly cast off his people.* But secondly, *He never doth, he never can really cast them off.*

For the Use of this Point :

First, By way of Instruction or *Use I.* Admonition it should teach us this lesson, namely, to learn to be acquainted with, and not to be strangers to the manner of Gods dealings towards his own Children; take heed of entertaining hard thoughts of God, though thou maist be under streights and pressures, inward, outward, inward temptations and desertions, or outward afflictions and miseries, yet take heed of murmuring



16 Gods great care of his good People

murmuring against God, yea though he seem for a while, to hide his face from thee, it is true indeed we should be very sensible of the least frown of our fathers face, and of the least of his withdrawings from us, as *David* in the like case Psalm. 30.7. *Thou didst hide thy face* (saith he) *and I was troubled*, look as it is with a little Child that hath lost its Mother in the fields, it cryes, and lifts up its note, my Mother, my Mother, so much more when God is gone, should we cry out, alas, where is my God, O! where is my Lord, how shall I meet with him, whom my soul loveth, for if God be gone, light is gone, life is gone; yea, hope, joy, peace and all is gone; therefore we should be sensible (I say) of Gods withdrawings from us: I but yet not so sensible as to despair, and to sink down in despondency, for God will come, and mercy will come, Peace and joy will come, yea Christ and comfort will come; as *Mr Glover* the Martyr, he found no comfort, till he came to the Stake, and then he cryed out, *O he is come, he is come*, meaning the



the Holy Ghost was come: the longest night will have its day, and though sorrow may be for a night, yet joy will come in the morning, therefore believe and wait, saith David, Psal. 40. 1. *In waiting I have waited, and mine eyes fail while I wait for my God,* - Psal. 69. 3. And pray and wait, and lie at the feet of mercy and wait, and be humble and wait, for certainly they that wait upon God shall never be ashamed of their waiting. That is the first Use for Information.

Secondly, Here is matter for Humiliation to all or most of Gods servants, I may speak (I am afraid) not only my own heart, but the hearts of many of you here present; what cause have we to be humbled for our unbelief, and our distrust of Gods power, and providence, and promises? if we are in any streights, O how ready are we to cry out, *the Lord hath forsaken me, & my Lord hath forgotten me;* and 'tis in vain to wait upon God any longer: truly these are the murmurings and complainings of our hearts: we are very apt

*I sa. 49. 14.*

to be suspicious of God, and to have hard thoughts of our Father, to be jealous that God will not be as good as his word: we question his truth and faithfulness; we can trust him for our eternal, but not for our temporal deliverance: the truth is we are short spirited and loath to wait; *he that believes makes not haste*, but we have so little faith, that we make haste, and are ready to limit the holy One of *Israil*; we are very unwilling to trust God, unless we can trace him; for this we should be humbled and ashamed in the sight of our God.

*Use 3.*

But thirdly (and the Use which I principally aim at) for Exhortation: two Exhortations of great importance I have to commend to you, (and then I shall close up this Point onely with a word of Comfort.)

The first is this; If it be thus, that though God may sometimes seem to cast off his people, yet he doth never really cast them off: Then I beseech you make this sure to your own souls, that you are of the num-

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ber of Gods people, else you can have no comfort from this Doctrine, for you see he is call'd here in the Text *the God of Israel*: be sure you are *Gods Israel*, and then this Doctrine will afford you abundance of comfort.

But you will say to me, How shall we know and be assured that we are Gods people, and that God is our God, and will be our God wherever we are, and in what condition soever we are.

To this I answer, Content not your selves with generals, that you are professors of Religion, that you have the stile of Christians, and the bare naked name of Christianity, for you know what is said of the Church of *Sardis*, Rev. 3. 1. *Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.*

As now first, do not content your selves that you are professors of the Gospel, when others are opposers of the Gospel, for believe it, professors of the Gospel may perish everlastingly. *Matth. 7. 22. 23. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name,*

and in thy name have cast out Devils, and in thy name done many wonderfull Works? have we not sat at thy Table, been admitted to the Sacrament, &c? yet our blessed Saviour will say, *Depart from me, I know you not, though you have been professors.*

And secondly, Content not your selves with this, that you frequent Ordinances, when others it may be despise them (and so from Scepticism turn to Atheisme, as many do at this day) for you shall read of some *Ezek. 33. 31, 32.* that did sit before God like his people, and delighted in hearing the Prophet *Ezekiel*, and his Doctrine was to them as sweet as musick, *they heard thee with delights* (saith God to his Prophet) *and with their mouth they shew much love, but though they hear my words yet they will not do them, for their heart goeth after their covetousness.* It is not enough to frequent Ordinances, content not your selves therefore with that.

Thirly, Content not your selves with this, that you are free from gross and scandalous sins: the Pharise

risee *Luk. 18. 11.* could say, *God I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this Publican.*

Fourthly, Content not your selves with this, that you have better parts than other men; it may be thou hast excellent gifts in prayer, thou hast a voluble tongue, a fluent expression of thy self, and art enriched with knowledge, and canst dispute for the truth, O do not rest satisfied with this, for Christianity is a matter of grace rather than of gifts, gifts are but the common work of Gods Spirit, and are many times, nay for the most part bestowed upon castawayes; gifts are for others good more than for our own good, whereas grace proceeds from Gods peculiar love, and grace is bestowed for our own good more than for the good of others; remember this therefore, a man may go to hell notwithstanding all his gifts.

And fifthly, Do not content your selves that you are joyned with Gods people, and have the approbation of them that are godly, alas

godly men may be deceived, they may think a great deal better of you than there is cause; consider what the Apostle saith, 2 Cor. 10. 18. *Not he that commendeth himself is approved, but he whom the Lord commendeth;* so may I say, not he that man commendeth is approved of God, but he whom God commendeth: there are not any of all these outward priviledges of Gods people but an hypocrite may have them, and may go as farre in them as the most sincere professour in the world.

But you may say, What shall I do that I may be assured that God is my God, and that I am one of his people whom he will not cast off?

Brethren, you must know that the enquiry must be made from within, from your own bosoms. Gal. 6. 4. *Let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoycing in himself alone, and not in another.* That is, as One comments well upon the Text, *that a mans rejoycing may be in the testimony of his own conscience, and not in the applause of another mans tongue:* you must look I say from within,



within, that this your rejoycing be the testimony of a good conscience; that you may have, as St John saith, 1 Joh. 5. 10 the witness in your selves: Consider therefore what are the actings of your souls towards God, and then you may know what Gods actings are towards you. Now the actings of your souls towards God, may be discerned and discovered by these six or seaven evidences, I beseech you mark them.

First, Tell me, can you choose God for your God, for your Lord and Master? can you choose to serve him, as well as to be justified and saved by him? Christs generation are call'd a seed that will serve him, *Psa. 22. 30. a seed shall serve him, it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation: a seed shall serve him: it is a good observation of St Austin, The carnal man Utuntur* (saith he) *doth but make use of God Deo ut fru-* that he may enjoy the world; I but on *antur man-* the contrary, a godly sincere Christian *do.* doth but make use of the world that he may enjoy God.

Again secondly, Ask your own souls this question; who is your



Gal. I, 16.

Counsellor, or who do you consult withall in the times of your doubts, and fears, and streights, and dangers; do you consult with God, or do you consult with flesh and blood? This is the Churches argument, *Psal. 48.14. For this God is our God for ever and ever, he will be our guide even unto death.* Now do you do thus, do you consult with God, are you guided by his Spirit, or are you guided by the spirit of the world: *St Paul* would not consult with flesh and blood, do you consult altogether with the world? thus and thus saith the world, thus and thus do I esteem the world, why let the world and all the world be liars, and God onely true, he is to be consulted with and not the world.

Thirdly, Ask your souls this question, What is your refuge, what is your support in the day of your dangers and distresses, what do you most of all trust to in the day of your calamity? *Some* trust in chariots, and *some* in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God, *Psal. 20.7. Some* trust in their wits, that

that is in their carnal policies, and in the shifts and fetches of their own brains; and some again trust in their wealth, *The rich mans wealth is his strong City*, Prov. 18. 11. and some trust in the favour of great men, whom *Jeremiah* saies, *Cursed be Jer. 17. 5. the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arme:* and some trust in one thing, and some in another, I but canst thou say with *David*, Psal. 71. 3. *Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort:* let others trust in this and trust in that, I but I will not trust in my sword, nor in my bow, neither in my wealth, nor wit, nor friends, nor in my carnal refuges, I regard none of these, but it is good Ps. 73. 28. for me to draw nigh to God, it is good for me to keep close to God in wayes of righteousness, if I keep my integrity, my integrity will keep me; canst thou thus make God thy refuge? That is a third evidence whereby thou maist know thou art one of those whom God will not cast off.

And then fourthly, Ask thy soul this question, Who art thou willing

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shall be thy reward at the great day? canst thou say my record is in Heaven, and my reward also is in Heaven, *that though men render me evil for good, and hatred for my love, yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God, Isa. 49. 4.* for it is observed, that the same Hebrew word that signifies work, signifies also a reward; and it is a good observation, that Gods work is our wages, it is reward enough for us to do service for God: Now canst thou say, what reward soever I have here on earth, or what injury soever I meet with from men, yet notwithstanding I have my reward in Heaven; therefore if my enemy hunger I can feed him, if he thirst I can give him drink, I can overcome evil with goodness, and all because I have my reward in Heaven: But on the contrary, most miserable is the condition of that man that hath his reward here on earth, and his portion here below: It is said *Mat. 6. 2. The Pharisees have their reward*, that is, all that ever they can look for, as the word signifies.

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But then fifthly, Ask thy soul this question, Hath God the supremacy in thy heart, hath he the highest room, hath he the best room in thy soul? hast thou set up a Throne for God in thy heart, whereas heretofore self-love and the creature have been set up above God, I but now whatever thou affectest or esteemest, thou affectest and esteemest it onely in order to God, and in him and for him; canst thou say, I am resolved I will not hinder nor break my peace with God to keep peace with men, O God forbid I should do so: as a common souldier doth not break the command of his Captain though he do not obey his Captain, if the Generall command the contrary, for the Generall must be obeyed though all the inferiour Officers be displeased: so here, God must be obeyed, his voice must be hearkned to, though all the world, and all the Princes of the world should command the contrary, Gods command must stand, it is a good rule——

*It is no prejudice to any humane authority, to prefer Gods authority before.*

*Bona Dei  
sine bono  
Deo.*

before it, for if to preserve the dearest enjoyment we have in the world, we break our peace with God, the Lord is able to dash all the comfort, we expect from that enjoyment, and to make it either a dead contentment, or else a torment to us, that we shall have (as he said) the gifts of God without God himself, we may have the shell of the mercy, but shall never have the kernell of the mercy: But on the contrary, if we keep our peace with God, we shall be sure to find in him, whatever we deny for him, riches, honours, friends, liberty, comforts, or any thing, we shall have all in him, and all will be so much the sweeter to us, as they spring from the Fountain, and are not conveyed to us by the Cistern, as they were before. This is a fifth question I propound to you, or an evidence whereby you may know whether you are Gods people: Can you thus set up a Throne for God in your hearts, that he shall have the supremacy, and his authority shall be obeyed, whoever be displeased, or disobeyed. Sixthly,

Sixthly, Can you be contented with God for your portion? (that is another evidence I would propound to you) that if you were to choose a thousand times, you would choose no other God but him. Psal. 73.25. *Whom have I in Heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee, nothing but thy self O blessed God, can give satisfaction to my immortall soul; if I have but thee, though I be as poor as Job upon the dunghill, yet I am rich enough, I will say with David, the lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places, yea I have a goodly heritage, because the Lord himself is my portion.* Now if you can thus choose God; you may conclude that God hath chosen you; if you can thus love God, you may certainly conclude, that God loves you; and if you are his people, you may be assured he is your God, and will ever continue to be your God, that is the sixth evidence.

In the seventh and last place, Call your selves to an account, and see whether ye be Gods Israel, yea, or no,



## 30 Gods great care of his good People

no, for you see God is the God of  
 Israel, God will not cast off his  
 people, his Israel, thou art Israel,  
 my servant, I will not cast thee away;  
 the place I named before, and tru-  
 ly God is good to Israel, even to such  
 as are of a clean heart, and peace  
 shall be upon the Israel of God. Tell  
 me therefore are you true Israelites,  
 are you Nathanaels in whom there is  
 no guile, can you turn the insides  
 of your Spirits out unto God, and  
 say, search me O Lord, and know  
 my heart, try me, and know my  
 thoughts, and see if there be any way  
 of wickedness in me: I cannot deny  
 but there is wickedness in me, but  
 see if there be any way of wicked-  
 ness, any course of sin in me, so that  
 I make a trade of sin, he that is born  
 of God doth not practise sin, John  
 1. 3. 9. he doth not say he doth not  
 sin at all, but he doth not make a  
 Trade of sin as the word signifies.  
 Canst thou say, Lord thou knowest,  
 in the uprightness of my heart  
 I speak it, there is not one Duty,  
 but I would submit to it, and would  
 willingly practise it; there is not one  
 sin

αυαπλιαν  
 & πολεμ.

fin that I allow in me, I would abhor, I would detest and reform every fin: And can you strive more to be religious, than to seem to be religious, and do you endeavour to exceed the best opinion that ever any had of you? and do you love a faithfull, soul searching Ministry? that is a great sign of sincerity, when a man can say, let the word pierce me, let it smite me, let it wound and cut me, so it may cure me, let it wound my sin, so it may save my soul: do you love that Ministry, that comes most to the quick, and that discovers most of your secret corruptions to you? If it be thus with you, it is a sign you are Gods *Israel*, and therefore a people, whom he will never cast off: the Lord will be your God now, and at death, and after death, and to all eternity.

But now on the contrary (and pray mark it) if you be such as choose the World for your Portion, rather than God for your Portion, if the world have the cream of your affections, if it have the highest seat and room in your hearts, if  
you

you be such as seek the world, more than God, earth more than heaven (for as I have sometimes told you he that seeks earth, more than heaven, may well get earth, but he shall never get heaven) if you serve the world more than God, and if you be such who trust in men more than you trust in God; if you be as the Apostle speaks, *lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God*; in a word, if you be hypocrites having onely a form of godlyness without the power of it; if you be Apostates, falling from your principles, and from your own profession, and draw back (O! saith God, *That man that draws back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.*) If you be such as are impenitent, and stubborn, and unreformed under all corrections, and under all instructions, that *The lead is consumed, and the bellows burnt*, and all to no purpose; if all means used for your reformation are ineffectuall, that no good hath been wrought upon you, after so many Sermons, after so many warnings, after so many corrections,

φιλήδονοι  
μᾶλλον ἢ  
φιλόθεοι.  
2 Tim. 3. 4.

Heb. 10.  
38.

Jer. 6. 29.

ons, after so many checks of conscience, after so many knockings at the doors of your hearts by the spirit of God; if it be thus with you; then you may fear you are in the number of those that God will cast off, and cast away, *Jer. 6. 30. Reprobare filius shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them*; The Lord hath cast them off for ever: O! that the Lord would make some of you, your own judges, by these seaven interrogatories, I have now propounded to you; by these and the like discoveries you may know whether you are in the number of those this Doctrine here speaks of, that God will never cast off; this is the first exhortation, If you would have the comfort of this Doctrine make this sure to your selves, that you are Gods *Israel*.

My second exhortation is this, If God will never cast off his people, his *Israel*, as it is here in the Text, he is the God of *Israel*, when *Israel* is in captivity. Then I beseech you, let it be a powerfull perswasion to every one of us, that seeing  
God

Josh. 3.  
8.

God is unwilling to cast us off, that we would be unwilling to cast God off; will not God cast off his people, then let us who are his people, resolve never to cast off him: how sweet and savoury, is that counsel of *Joshua* to the Israelites, *but cleave unto the Lord your God as ye have done unto this day.* O! cleave to this God: we live in times of Apostacy, wherein some fall from their Principles, others fall from their profession, and others fall from the practise of a Godly life. O!

Job 15.4.

the wofull Apostacy, defection, and backsliding of these times of ours! that which *Eliphaz* falsely charged upon *Job*, may be truly charged upon many Professors in these days, *thou castest off fear, and restrainest prayer before God.* There are many in these dayes that cast off the fear of God, and walk in wayes of libertinism, and looseness, and that cast off duty towards God, and duty towards their Superiours; and there are some that cast off love to Christ, his truth and servants, and that cast off his Ordinances too. O! the

Lord

Lord open their eyes, that they may see what a Wilderness they have brought their poor souls into, being without Gods great mercy, at the very gates of death and everlasting ruine; but I beseech you my brethren, be not you of this number, but as God speaks in the like case, *though Israel play the Harlot, yet let not Judah offend*, so may I say, though many Apostate and backslide in these daies, yet be not you in the number of them, be not you Apostates and backsliders. I beseech you tell me what hath God done, that you should cast him off? come and testifie against him this day wherein hath he done you hurt? what iniquity have you found in God, that you are weary of him? as our Saviour saith, John 10. 32. *many good works, have I shewed you, from my Father, for which of those works do you stone me?* So may I say to you, many mercies hath God bestowed upon you, mercy upon mercy, mercies of his right hand, and mercies of his left hand, mercies positive, and mercies pri-

vative,



vative, mercies in hand, and mercies in hope, now for which of all these mercies have you cast him off? O hearken to that counsell 2 Chron. 15. 2. *The Lord is with you while ye be with him, and if ye seek him he will be found of you, but if ye forsake him he will forsake you*; if you cast him off here, he will cast you off at that great day, when you would give all the world for one smile of his face.

## Use 4.

The last Use of this Doctrine is this, Doth not God really cast off his people when he doth it seemingly? is he *Israels* God when *Israel* is in captivity? this then is matter of unspeakable comfort to all Gods people, to all true *Nathanaels* whose hearts are sincere and upright, in the midst of all their streights, and doubts, and fears, in the midst of all their troubles, and tryals, and dangers, and distresses whatsoever: what though God cast thee upon thy bed of sickness, where thou maist meet with strong pains, yet he will not cast thee off: and what though God cast thee into prison, yet he will not  
cast

cast thee off: & what though God cast thee into captivity; and into a Land of strangers and bondage, yet he will not cast thee off: Nay what though God cast thee into such a condition, that thou art out of the reach of humane help, as in the case of distraction and desertion; in the case of distraction, none can restore the use of reason but he that gave us reason; and in the case of desertion, none can take off wrath from the conscience but he that set it on. What though God cast thee into such a condition, that thou walkest in darkness and seest no light, yet God will not cast thee off: Nay what though God should let loose Sathan upon thee for a while to buffet thee, as you know *St Paul* had an Angel of Sathan to buffet him; so Sathan may be let loose upon thee to buffet thee, to tempt thee with the batteries of hell, why yet he will not cast thee off; nay God will so order it, that although his temptation may wound thy soul, yet it shall not hurt thy soul; *Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall* (saith *David* speaking  
ing

38. *Gods great care of his good People*

ing of *Saul*) *Psal.* 18. 13. *but the Lord helped me.*: so *Sathan* thrusts fore at us, O many a bitter stroak, and many a poisoned arrow, and many a fiery dart *Sathan* seeks to wound us with at one time or other; I but *God* is our help, *God* will not cast us off for all that: True indeed we are troubled on every side yet not distressed, we are perplexed but not in despair: It is an elegant expression in the Greek tongue, perplexed but not in despair, persecuted but not forsaken, cast down but not destroyed: Cast down, I but not cast off: we may be cast into adversity, and be cast off by men, and yet not be cast off by *God* for all that: O what a consolation may this be to every one of *Gods* children! That is an excellent Scripture, *Isa.* 54. 10. *For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the Covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.* O comfort your selves with that Text of Scripture: therefore as the *Apostle* saith triumphing-ly,

2Cor. 4. 9.

ὁ παῖς  
θλιβόμε-  
νοι, ἀλλ' ὁ  
συνωχούμενοι, &c.

ly, Rom. 8. 35, to the end; *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? nay, saith he, in all these things we are more than conquerors. We conquer when kil'd, kil'd and not destroyed; death may make a separation between body and soul, but it can never make a separation between the soul and Christ; Neither things present, nor things to come, nor bonds, nor imprisonment, nor sickness, nor banishment nor fiery Furnace, nor Lions den, nor Principalities, nor powers, nor life, nor death, nor Devils, nor any thing shall ever make a separation between God and his people, he will never cast them off in any of these conditions: O that we could but suck the sweetness of this consolation, and lay it up as a Cordiall for a fainting day. And thus I have done with the first Point of Doctrine, gathered from the first branch of the Text, the Author of this comfortable message, it is the Lord, the God of Israel, he is Israels God when*  
*Israel*

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40 Gods great care of his good People

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Israel is carried captive ; therefore though God may cast off his people seemingly, yet he doth not cast them off when he seems to cast them off.

It remains I should come to the second branch of the Text, and that is the message it self, *I will own them and acknowledge them* (saith God) *like these good figgs.* But of that I shall speak something by Gods assistance in the further prosecution of the Text.

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SERMON

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## SERMON II.

Jeremiah Chap. 24. Verse 5.

*Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Like these good Figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the Land of the Caldeans for their good.*



You know what entrance I made into this Text; two parts I shewed are considerable in it, The Author of a comfortable Message, and the Message self: The Author of the comfortable Message is *the Lord*, described here by his relation to his people, *the God of Israel*, and this first branch I have dispatched.

C

I come



I come now to the second branch of the Text, and that is the Message it self: Wherein we have first the explication of a Type, and then the application of it.

The explication of a Type in these words, *Like these good Figs*: where the Lord informs the Prophet *Jeremiah*, what is the meaning of the Vision of the two baskets of Figs, the one of good Figs, the other of bad Figs; *Like these good Figs* (saith God) *so are all those good or godly persons whom I have sent away captive into Babylon*; so that God here compares the small number of godly ones that were yet carried captive to *Babylon*, to Figs; and he compares them to good Figs.

But here it may be demanded first, Why are these godly persons compared to Figs?

I answer, For these three Reasons briefly:

First, Because all the goodness they had in them was of Gods own planning, *Isa. 60. 21. The branch of my planting, the work of my hands that I may be glorified.*

Secondly,

Secondly, They are compared to Figs, because as Figs you know ever grow more and more till they come to a ripeness and maturity, that they may be fit for the Gardiner that planted them, so did these godly persons grow more and more in grace, till they came to some ripeness and maturity, that they might be fit for the service of that God who had bestowed this grace upon them, fit to glorifie him here, and fit to be glorified of him hereafter.

And then thirdly, As Figs when they are ripe they are very pleasant and delightfull, they were much esteemed and desired among the Jews, as appears by *Hosea 9.10. I saw your fathers (saith God) as the first ripe in the Fig tree*: so likewise these godly persons that had the Image of God stampt upon them, and were now trees of righteousness, that brought forth fruit unto God, they were very delightfull unto God; God was well pleased with them; *Psal. 147.11. The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.* (And

by the way you may observe there  
 a very sweet conjunction between  
 fearing God and putting our trust in  
 his mercy; we must so fear the Lord  
 that we still put our trust in his mer-  
 cy, lest we should despair; and so  
 put our trust in his mercy, that we  
 fear him, lest we should presume:  
 but that I quote the Scripture for  
 this, the Lord delights in them that  
 fear him, and it is very much that  
 God should take delight in such  
 poor despicable creatures as we are  
 and we have a very strange expres-  
 sion, 1 Chron. 29. 17. *I know also  
 my God that thou takest pleasure in  
 uprightness:* a wonderfull condes-  
 cension, that the great God of Hea-  
 ven and earth should take pleasure  
 in any service that such poor worth-  
 less worms as we are can perform  
 that the Lord should take pleasure  
 in us, or in any thing that is in us  
 but we must know, that uprightness  
 is the work of Gods own Spirit in  
 our hearts, and therefore God first  
 bestowes the graces of his Spirit up-  
 on his servants, which are call'd  
 the fruits of his Spirit, and then he  
 delight

delights in his own fruits, according to that of the Psalmist, *The Lord re-joyceth in his own works*; that is, in the works of his own Spirit that he hath wrought. And *St Austin* hath a sweet Meditation upon it; *Lord (saith he) do not thou look upon my own works, but look upon thy own works in my heart; for if thou lookest upon my works I shall be cursed, but if thou lookest upon thy own works I shall be crowned.* God takes delight in his own works; he crowns his own gifts not our merits in us. Thus you see why they are called Figs.

But then secondly, it may be demanded, How these could be called good Figs, when our blessed Saviour saith expressly, *Matth. 19. 17. There is none good but One, that is God?*

To this I answer, It is true there is none good but onely God, that is, there is none good so as God is good, none good in that manner of goodness, none good in that measure of goodness that God is.

First, God alone is originally good, men are good only by participation,

cipation, as they partake of the goodness of God, but God hath his goodness from none, he is the fountain of his own goodness, all the goodness that is in us, is a derivative goodness, it is but a drop of that ocean of goodness that is in God: look as the beams of the Sun they proceed from the Sun, but the Sun is the fountain of its own light; so all the goodness that is in the creature, it proceeds from God, but God (I say) is the fountain of his own goodness, therefore none is originally good but God, that is the meaning of our Saviour when he saith, *There is none good but One, namely God.*

And secondly, None is essentially good but God, the goodness of God it is his very nature, it is his very essence; for that is a true rule amongst Divines, *Whatsoever is in God is God himself*: the goodness of God is God himself, and so the mercy of God is God himself, and the love of God is God himself; if there be any goodness in the sons of men, it is but a quality a property that is se-

parable

*Quicquid  
in Deo,  
Deus est.*

parable from the essence; for a man may be a man and yet not a good man, but God cannot be God unless he be good; God can as soon cease to be God, as cease to be good, goodness being essentially in him.

And then thirdly, There is none absolutely and perfectly good but onely God, God is every way good, and he is so perfectly good that nothing can be added to him, and nothing can be detracted from him: now it cannot be said of any man living upon the earth, that he is perfectly good, for alas our goodness is mixt with a great deal of sinfulness and infirmity, our gold is mingled with a great deal of dross; but God is absolutely good.

And fourthly, God is unchangeably good, *there is in him no variableness nor shadow of turning*, Jam. 1.17. but now it is not so with us, our goodness for the most part is very fickle and unconstant.

And then lastly, God calls these godly persons that were sent into captivity *good Figs*, not so much in reference to their inherent sanctification,



cation, as in respect of his own gracious acceptation, he accepted them in Jesus Christ the Saviour of the world, whose blood was shed from the foundation of the world, and so beholding them in Christ, he lookt upon them as good, as righteous, as godly persons. Now observe (and it is worth our observation) that at this time when the land of *Judah* was filled with abominations from one end thereof unto the other, at this time when the iniquity of the land of *Judah* was boyled up to that height that it spaed out the inhabitants of the land, at this time when the multitude of sinners provoked the Lord so to anger, that he stretch- ed upon them the line of *Samaria*, and the plummet of the house of *Ahab*, that is, gave the same Cup into their hands to drink that he did to the ten Tribes; at this time when God threatned to wipe *Jerusalem* as a man wipes a dish when he turns it upside down, as we have it *2 King. 21. 13.* yet observe there were some good even at this time, here was a basket of good Figs, that yet

yet notwithstanding were carried captive into *Babylon*. The Doctrine then that I would commend to you from hence is this,

*That in the worst of times and amongst the worst of men, God will still have a remnant of those that are good, and that shall retain their goodness.*

In *Noahs* time when there was such a deluge of sin that it brought a deluge of water to drown the world, when all flesh had corrupted their wayes upon earth, and God repented that he had made man, and it grieved him at his very heart, yet it is said, that *Noah* was upright in that generation; and it was a great honour to him to be upright in that generation, than to have been upright in a godly generation: *Elijah* lived in as corrupt an age I think as ever any man lived in, for he complains he had no man to stand by him; O saies he, *the children of Israel have forsaken thy Covenant, thrown down thine Altars, and slain thy Prophets with the sword, and I even I only am left.* There was not so much as a face of Religion appearing.

*1 King 19: 10.*

v. 18,

pearing, and he thought there had not been one godly man left in all the land of *Israel* besides himself, and yet at that very time God had some that were good, *I have seven thousand* (saies God) *that have not bowed their knees to Baal.* In the declining times of *Israel*, God yet *Judah* that was faithfull to him. *Hosea 11. 12. Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit, but Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithfull with the Saints.* In the declining times of *Judah*, when there was a very great defection and apostacy, as you may read *Isa. 6. 9, 10. In hearing you shall hear and not understand, and in seeing you shall see but not perceive:* when their hearts were hardened to their destruction, yet notwithstanding God had *Jeremiah* and *Baruch*, and a basket of good Figs, that is, those that were very good, even in the worst times of *Judah*, in the times of their captivity. In the Prophet *Isaias* time there was a very sinfull and shamefull apostacy, *Isa. 1. 21, 22, 23. saies the Lord (complaining*

of them) How is the faithfull City (speaking of Jerusalem) become an harlot? it was full of judgment, righteousness lodged in it, but now murderers: thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixt with water, thy Princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves, every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards; they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them. But yet even in Isaiahs time there was a remnant like a Teyl tree, and as an Oak whose substance is in them when they have cast their leaves; there shall be a little remnant like an Oak that hath the sap in it; so saies God, the holy seed shall be the stability of it. The Church of Sardis was for the most part hypocriticall and corrupt, they had a name to live when they were dead: (a just Picture of our Times:) yet saies God, thou hast a few Names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy. In the times of Arius that desperate heretick that denied the Divinity of Jesus

Isa. 6. 13.

Rev. 1. 3, 4.

*Ingemuit  
orbis se fa-  
ctum Ar-  
rianum.*

Jesus Christ, so that the whole world groaned as *St Jerom* observes, that it was turned Arian, yet notwithstanding there was an *Athanasius* that did help to bear up the truth with courage and confidence against all opposition : and you know in *Queen Maries* dayes, when Popery was here set up by a Law, yet there were then many faithfull servants of Jesus Christ that sealed the truth with their blood, and were more willing to lay down their lives for Christ, than many now adayes are to part with a little of their estates for Christ and for the Gospell ; so that you see, in the worst of times, and amongst the worst of men, the Lord will have some that are good, and that retain their goodness.

And if you would know the Reasons of it, they are these ;

*Reas. 1.*

First, Because the Kingdom of Jesus Christ is an everlasting Kingdom, of his Kingdome there shall be no end, *Luk. 1. 33.* Jesus Christ will have a Church here upon earth maugre the might and malice, the rage and fury, the plots and projects, the

the craft and subtiltie of Sathan and all his instruments : All the enemies of the Church, may as well think to turn the earth off its hinges, or pluck the Stars out of the Firmament, or blow out the Sun with a pair of Bellows, or shake the pillars of Heaven, as to root out the number of the godly from off the face of the earth, *The gates of Hell, shall not prevail against the Church.* It is true indeed the Church of Christ is not tied to any particular place, nor to a stinted number, but yet like the sea, though it lose in one place, it gains still in another place, and the Church of Christ being his spouse, he will never lose his spouse, he will alwayes have some even in the worst of times, and in the worst of places, that shall own him and his truth; therefore (you know) he had a Church in *Neroes House*, though *Nero* was one of the bloodiest Monsters that ever lived amongst men, *Phil. 4. 22. All the Saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesars household:* And he had some that did bear up  
his

Mat. 16.  
18.



his Name when *Antipas* his faithfull Martyr was slain, and where the Devil had his Synagogue; *Rev. 2. 13.* That's one Reason.

*Reas. 2.*

*2 Tim. 2.*

19.

*Mat. 24.*

24.

*Joh. 4. 14.*

*1 Joh. 3. 5.*

Secondly, The Foundation of God stands sure, and therefore it is not possible that the Elect should be totally seduced: our Saviour saies indeed there shall be such cunning seducers and impostors, that if it were possible they should deceive the very Elect; I but that is impossible, Gods Elect it is true may sometimes be hurried into ways of error and sin by a Croud, but then their hearts will still be God-ward, just as the Needle of the Seamans Compass may jog this way, and that way, but the Bent of the Needle will still be North-ward; so their hearts will be God-ward, and they will recover themselves, the Spirit is in them like a springing water, that springs up to eternal life, it is an immortal seed so that they cannot sin unto death, and the fear of God is the aw-back of the soul, it is such an awe upon their spirits, that they shall never

never totally and finally depart from God. Jer. 32. 40. *I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.*

And thirdly, The intercession of Reas. 3. Jesus Christ is very prevalent for all his Elect, *I have prayed for thee* Luke 32. (saies Christ to Peter) *that thy* 32. *faith fail not,* and this prayer he made not for Peter onely, but for all that shall believe in his Name to the end of the world, as appears by John 17. 20. *Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.*

And then fourthly and lastly, Reas. 4. God will alwaies have a remnant of good ones of Godly Persons, that shall retain their goodness even for this very end, to convince gainsayers, to stop the mouthes of wicked & ungodly men that are ever blattering against the truth; he will have some that shall bear witness against them, that they shall not plead ignorance, of that truth they so much scorn and contemn, and of the ways of holiness, which they so much

much abhor: as God would have the Gospel preached, if not for conversion, yet for conviction, to be a testimony against them that received it not. Mat. 24. 14, saies Christ, *this Gospel of the Kingdom, shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all Nations*; so likewise God will have some faithfull ones to be his *Martyrs*, to lift up his name, and to bear witness still unto his truth, against them that oppose it, and to rise up in judgement against those that are the desperate and implacable enemies of it, as it is said of *Noah*, by building the Ark he condemned the world, that is his righteousness condemned their unrighteousness, his faithfulness condemned their infidelity, his sincerity condemned their hypocrisie, and his steadfastness condemned their apostacy, so God (I say) will still have some to bear witness, and to judge the wicked of the world, when he shall have a little number that will own him, when others do disown him, and despise him.

Now for the use of this Point,

It

Heb. II.

7.

If it be so that God will still have Use 1.  
some in bad times that are good and  
retain their goodness, then I be-  
seech you tell me, are you good in  
bad times, are you the better, the  
the worse the times are? my brethren  
I need not tell you that we live in  
sad and sinfull times, for certainly  
iniquity, atheisme and heresie are  
boyled up to a greater height in  
these three or four years last past,  
than they were in forty years be-  
fore: now doubtless in such distin-  
guishing and trying times as these  
are, you will either be very good  
or else very bad; you will be like  
one of these two baskets of Figs,  
the good Figs were very good, and  
the bad were very bad; tell me then  
whether you be good Figs, or whe-  
ther you be bad Figs?

Jer. 24. 2.

Now to help you in this scrutiny,  
there are but these three questions I  
would propound to you, and I wish  
you would propound them to your  
own souls: First, Are you impar-  
tially good? Secondly, Are you sin-  
cerely good? Thirdly, Are you con-  
stantly good? Let me speak to eve-  
ry

ry one of these heads a little.

First tell me, Are you impartially good? have you respect to all the Commandments of God? *Psal.* 119.6. *Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect to all thy Commandments.* Do you respect every command without partiality and without hypocrisie? as the Apostle hath it *1 Tim.* 5. 25. Do you provide things honest in the sight of God, and in the sight of men? in the sight of God in the duties of the first Table, and in the sight of men in the duties of the second Table? do you study to be righteous in reference to the second Table, as well as to be religious in reference to the first Table? This is to be truly good, if you be thus impartially good without halving it in the waies of Gods Commandements. I beseech you consider and remember this, he that makes no conscience of the Duties of the second Table, God abhors all the Duties that he performs in reference to the first Table; as now if you be unjust in your trading, if you be injurious in your

your dealing, if you rob the poor, because he is poor, and oppres the needy in the gate; if you sell the needy for a piece of silver, and the poor for a pair of shooes, if you take advantage of the poors necessities, if you withhold from him that which is his right, if you detain the hire of the labourer, and of him that takes pains for you, as the Apostle St James saies, *Behold the hire of the labourers which have reaped down your Corn, which is detained of you by fraud cryeth, and the cries of them which have reaped, are entred into the ears of the Lord of Sabbath,* James 5.4. (whereby the way you may observe, that if the detaining the labourers wages, that did reap down their Corn, was such a crying sin, what is it think you then to detain their right that take pains in the Lords vineyard, and labour in the Lords harvest? I pray God it be not laid to the charge of many in this City) if you be unrighteous I say in detaining that which is due to the labourer, if you be unmercifull, if you be uncharitable, in your censures



tures of others, know thus much, that there is no goodness at all in you; though you make never so much shew of Religion: if you do not make conscience of duties in the shop, God regards not all the duties you perform in the Church and on the Lords dayes; if you do not make conscience of the ninth commandment, *Thou shalt bear no false witness against thy neighbour*, thou shalt not slander thy neighbour, thou shalt not reproach thy neighbour, God regards not your observation of the fourth Commandment, for keeping of the Lords day: and this appears by what St James saies, *If any man among you seem to be religious and bridletb not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, that mans religion is vain*, James 1. 26. And indeed it is a thing very observable, that the Spirit of God makes the duties of the second Table to be a touch-stone to try the truth of our duties to the first Table: pray remember it, I will give you but two instances for it. First, that in James 1. 27. *Pure religion and undefiled*

defiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the Fatherless, and Widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world: as if he should say, Would you know whether you be truly religious or no, then see whether you be truly righteous, yea or no. And the other Scripture is 1 John 4.20. If a man say he loves God, and hateth his brother, he is a lyar, for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen? As if he should say, Would you know whether you love God yea or no, (which is the duty of the first Table) then see whether you love your brother yea or no, which is the duty of the second Table. Some men are all for holiness but nothing for righteousness; some on the contrary are all for righteousness but nothing for holiness: But I beseech you my brethren remember this, God hates an unrighteous holy man as much as he hates an unholy righteous man: Righteousness and holiness the duties of the two Tables must go both together. He  
bath

Luke 1. *hath delivered us out of the hands of*  
 74, 75. *our enemies, that we might serve him*  
*without fear in holiness and righte-*  
*ousness before him all the dayes of our*  
*life. And therefore know thus*  
*much, that although thou beest a*  
*man of never so excellent parts,*  
*and canst talk never so much of Re-*  
*ligion and Scripture, and hast ex-*  
*cellent and admirable gifts in pray-*  
*er, so that thou canst pray like an*  
*Angel; yet if thou dost not make*  
*conscience of the duties of the second*  
*Table, God abhors all thy parts and*  
*gifts, and holy language, and pro-*  
*fession whatsoever. This is the first*  
*question, Are you righteous as well*  
*as religious, and religious as well as*  
*righteous? Do you walk with an*  
*even foot towards the duties of both*  
*Tables?*

But secondly, Let 'me ask you  
 this question, Are you sincerely  
 good? Are you inwardly good?  
 There are many that are seemingly  
 good, but few that are really good;  
 many that are outwardly good, but  
 few that are inwardly good. You  
 know what the Scripture saith, *Rom.*  
 2. 28, 29.

2.28,29. He is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that Circumcision which is outward in the flesh, but he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and Circumcision is that of the heart, whose praise is not of men <sup>1 Sam. 16.</sup> but of God. God sees not as man sees; man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks to the heart: *Thou lovest truth in the in-* <sup>Psal. 51.6.</sup> *ward parts.* Give me an inward Christian; give me a Christian that is ever communing with his own heart, that is ever turning his eyes inwards and his heart outwards to God, this is a good Christian indeed. Hypocrites can perform outward holy duties, and many times outstrip those that are sincere, and yet in the mean time they are but painted sepulchres, fair without, but within full of corruption; they are but as a dunghill covered over with snow, that appears very white without, but within there is nothing but filthiness; they are but as apples of Sodom, fair without and rotten within. There are many that are seemingly Saints, outwardly Saints,

## 64 Gods great care of his good People

Saints, but inwardly they are no better than Devils. But now tell me, Are you the same within that you are without? Are your spirits not only free from guilt, but free from guile: *O blessed is the man in whose spirit there is no guile.* Are you good towards the Lord God of Israel, which was the commendation of *Abijah* the son of *Jeroboam*, *1 King. 14. 13.* *There was found some good thing in him toward the Lord God of Israel.* Indeed unsound and rotten-hearted Christians may be good towards men, I but they are not good towards the Lord God of Israel: But if you be inwardly good, if you be sincerely good, then are you good indeed. *Luther* relates a Story of a man that had led a very righteous, innocent, and unblameable life; but when he came upon his sick bed, he felt his heart full of doubts, and fears, and disquietments, and was much troubled about his spiritual estate; some of his friends came to him, and said to him, O Sir why are you troubled about your spiritual estate, you have lived a most

most righteous, a most innocent, and unblameable life. I (saies he) it is true, I have led such a life in your eyes, but the eye of man, and the eye of God, doe exceedingly differ. The judgement of man is one thing, ( saies he ) but the judgement of God is another thing. And therefore notwithstanding all my innocent life, which you so much applaud, I am afraid to die. I would apply it thus: If the godly, the righteous, those that are sincere, are so much troubled at the dregs of Guile, and Hypocrisie, that are in their own hearts, O! what cause then have they to tremble, that have no sincerity at all in them. And when that great day comes, wherein the secrets of all hearts shall be made manifest; wherein God will disclose the counsels of the heart, and all those secret rottennesses, and uncleannesses, that are in mens spirits, when that day shall come, which the Apostle speaks of, that will be a day of discovery, of all that inward filthiness, that is now disguised, and cloake,

1 Cor. 4. 5.

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under



under a fair pretence of holiness, and the like, O! where then will such ungodly ones, where will such rotten hearted sinners be able to appear? Let this therefore be the second question, Are you sincerely good, or are you rotten at heart yea or no?

And then thirdly, Answer to this question (and then I will tell you whether you are good, or no.) Are you constantly good? are you steadfastly good? God complains of *Ephraim*, *Hosea 6. 4. O Ephraim, what shall I doe unto thee? O Judah, what shall I doe unto thee?* (as if he should say, I know not what course to take with you) for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away, that is, their goodness was of no continuance at all; many such there are in these dayes, they are not constant in that which is good, they begin in the spirit, but end in the flesh, they are good for a while, but afterwards they shamefully fall away, either from the truth, or from the love, or from the Obedience of the

the Gospell; Just like your young Scholars, that begin newly to write, it may be they write two or three letters very handsomely, but by and by they blur all their copy. O! take heed you be not such; but if you be stedfast, unmoveable, abounding in the work of the Lord; if you hold out to the end; if you retain your integrity in the worst of times; if you be faithfull to God, his cause and truth; if you be established in the truth, and doe not start aside, and are not led away with the error of the wicked, to fall from your own stedfastness; if you be stedfast Christians, than are you good Christians. Answer but these three questions, and then I can tell whether you are good or no. This is the first Use. I should have call'd it a Use of examination; you should call your selves to an account, whether you be good Figs, or bad Figs. Alas this is a time wherein many grow worse and worse; *Evill men and seducers wax worse and worse,* (saies the Apostle) every day: just like a round stone upon the

*οὐκ ἔστιν ἡμεῖς  
οἱ ἐν τῷ  
καίρῳ.*  
2 Tim. 3.  
13.

top of a hill, when once it begins to tumble, it tumbles, and tumbles, and tumbles till it comes to the bottom. O! this is the case of many at this day, they run from error to error, from sin to sin, and from one wickedness to another, till they plunge themselves irrecoverably into the pit of destruction; but see whether you grow better and better, and retain your own goodness, whether you be impartially good, sincerely good, and constantly good, yea or no?

My second Use, is for exhortation, Let me beseech, and exhort you this day in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, (whose poor Messenger I am) That every one of you would strive to be good in bad Times; that you would endeavour to be like Lot in Sodom, and to be like Lights in the world, in the midst of a

Phil. 2. 16.

Crooked, and Perverse Generation; holding forth the word of life, and holding fast the word of truth: There is a holding forth the word of truth, that is by an undaunted profession, and a holding fast the word

word of truth, that is by an undaunted resolution, that you would be like to Fishes, that retain their freshness in the salt-water. O! that I could perswade you to doe as *Peter* said, (not onely to say so but do so) *Mat. 26. 33. Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.* How many motives might I use to press you to this?

First, Consider by doing this, you shall be like unto your God, for it is said of God, *Psal. 119. 68. Thou art good, and doest good.* You all hope to be like unto God in glory, labour then to be like unto God in grace; It is said of our blessed Saviour, *That he went about doing good, and healing* Act. 10. 38.  
*those that were oppressed of the devil.*

O! that we could labour to be good, and to be doing good continually. But some may say, how hard a matter is it to be good in bad Times? Alas it is an extream hard matter for a man to retain his integrity then, and to swim against the stream, when there are so many snares, and so many temptations. I answer (and I beseech you remem-

*Religio pe-  
perit divi-  
tias & fi-  
lia devo-  
ravit ma-  
trun.*

ber it) the best Christians are still bred up in the worst times, like as the foudest sheep are bred up in the shortest commons. It is very observable, that the Church and Religion, have ever lost ground in times of prosperity, and have ever gained ground in times of persecution, and therefore when *Constantine* had endowed the Church with large revenues, it was said, *Religion like a kind mother hath brought forth plenty, but plenty like an unkind daughter hath devoured her mother.* And it is observed, that in *Dia-  
clesian* time; which was the Tenth, and last persecution; the more Religion was opposed, the more a thousand times it prospered, insomuch that that bloody Emperour, when he saw that the more he strove against Christ, the lesse he prevailed, and the more he thought to suppress Religion, the more it thrived, he went in a pet, and laid down his Empire, and betook himself to a solitary life, he saw there was no good to be done that way: And *St Hilary* that lived in the times of that



that persecutor, did professe, that he was more afraid of Toleration, than of persecution; and he gives this reason, For (saies he) *the Toleration of Religion will make men Apostates, but the persecution of Religion usually makes men Martyrs.* So that the Church gains by Persecutions, and by troubles, and God looks you should be the best Christians in the worst times; and it will be a great token of your sincerity, if you can hold your own at that time, when others are wavring and declining.

But then secondly, take another motive, and tis this, consider if you be good amongst those that are bad, good in bad Times, this is that which will bring most honour to God, whose honour should be dearer to us than our own lives: It is observable that Christ teacheth us to pray for Gods glory before our own salvation; *Hallowed be thy name, before thy Kingdome come,* The honour of God was so wonderfully dear to him: Now this brings most honour to God, when you as his faithfull servants can own his truth, when

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most



most disown it. As that Souldier doth most honour his Captain, who stands his ground, when all his fellow Souldiers turn their backs; so this is that which will honour God indeed, if you stick to him when others fall off, and fall away.

Nay thirdly Consider, this is that which will bring most honour to your selves, and your profession; for look, as for a man to be evill in the best of times; to be evill amongst those that are good; this is the height of impiety: So on the contrary, for a man to be good amongst those that are evill, this is the height of Piety: 'tis a very easie matter to be good amongst those that are good, to be good in good times, when it is a credit, and an honour to professe Religion; hypocrites you know when they come amongst these that are godly, they will appear to be godly; *Judas* when he was in the School of Christ, carryed himself so fairly and inoffensively, that all the Disciples suspected themselves, rather than *Judas*, and said *Master is it I?* But now when a man can

own the truth, when others oppose it, and despise it; when a man fears God at that time when others cast off fear, and sticks to truth when others are ashamed of truth: When a man likewise keeps his warmth amongst frozen Christians, and his Spirituall life amongst dead and drowfie Christians; and his Spirituall groweth amongst decaying, and declining Christians: This is the Honour, this is the Crown of Christianity.

And then fourthly, Consider this, If you be good in the worst of times, certainly God will take care of you, and the less encouragement you have from men, the more encouragement you shall have from God; and the less you are owned by men, the more you shall be owned by God. God had a care of these poor Captives, this basket of good Figs, were carryed Captive into the Land of *Babylon*, I but God was with them, he stood by them (as I should have spoken to that point, if time would have given me leave,) and God did own and acknowledge them, so God will

own, and honour you, and stand by you, and strengthen and support you, and cause all your afflictions to work for your good; he will but prove you, that he may doe you good in the latter end; this is the second Use, a Use of exhortation.

*Use 3.*

Thirdly and lastly, It may serve greatly for the encouragement, and consolation of the godly in the worst of times; let the times be never so desparate, you see God will have a Number, some that will be faithfull to him, that will own him. and his cause, that will help, to bear up his truth and Name, that will hold fast their profession without wavering; 'tis true indeed, the Church of Christ may be like a Ship tossed, but it can never be overturned, it may be tossed because it is upon the Sea, but it can never be overturned because Jesus Christ is in it. The Church may be drenched in sorrow, but it cannot be drowned in misery. Therefore we should bear up our hearts in the very worst of times; and we should still cleave unto God, that

that he may cleave unto us; let us lift up those hands that hang down, and those feeble knees, there are more with us than against us; if one God be with us, it is more than if ten thousand worlds were against us. And know this, we shall never have cause to repent of our cleaving to God though in the worst of times. And so much shall suffice to have spoken of this second Doctrine, which is drawn from the first particular of the second branch of the Text, the explication of the Type.

I had thought to have spoken to the other particular, namely the application of it to these poor Captives; So will I acknowledge them, I will own them, I will take special notice of them that are carryed away Captive of Judah. The Doctrine I should have spoken to from hence is this:

That God doth own his people, and Doct.  
acknowledge them in the day of their dangers and distresses. He owns them by being present with them, and he owns them by supporting of them, and he owns them by delivering

vering of them, and he owns them because he bears a love to them, no change of conditon can change his affections towards them. O! the faithfullness of our God; you see freinds stand aloof off many times in the day of adversity; but God is a faithfull friend, he is ever nearest when trouble is near; and when he brings us into the worst condition, he is usually the best God unto us. The *Psalmist* hath a sweet passage *Psal. 22. 24.* For he hath not abhorred nor despised the affliction of the afflicted: neither hath he hid his face from him, but when he cryed unto him he heard him. God doth not despise the affliction of his people, as the manner of some is; in the day of their distress, then they hide away their faces, and will not own nor know those that are afflicted. It is a great comfort and encouragement that God will own his people when the world will not own them, and that God will be with them, and stand by them, and stick to them when the world rejects them, casts them off, and stands.

stands at a distance from them : I  
will acknowledge them saith God.  
But I see the time is too far spent,  
and I will not further intrench, ei-  
ther upon your patience or my  
own strength. So much shall suffice  
for this time.

SERMON







# SERMON III.

Jeremiah Chap. 24. Verse 5.

*Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Like these good Figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the Land of the Caldeans for their good.*



On may remember how far I proceeded in opening this Text, unto you in two Sermons the the last Lords day.

I have done with the Explication of the Type, *like these good Figs*; being the first particular of the second branch of the Text, namely the Message it self.

I come now unto the Application  
of

of this Type of the good Figs, unto these poor Captives, and the Application of it (if you look upon the Text) is wholly comfortable, and the comfort God reacheth out unto them under the Type of these good Figs, is three fold.

First, He tels them he would acknowledge them, whom he had sent away Captive of *Judah*.

Secondly, He tels them that it was *he* that had sent them out of that place, into the Land of the *Caldeans*.

And thirdly, He tels them that it was for their Spiritual profit and advantage; it was for their *good*. Every one of these will afford, us a point of Doctrine, and I shall by Gods assistance give you them in this, and another Sermon in the afternoon.

We will begin with the Application of this Message, in the first way of comfort, saies God, *So will I acknowledge them that are carryed away Captive of Judah*. So will I acknowledge them; that is I will own them, I will take special notice

tice of them; Mine eyes and my heart shall be toward them, although I have sent them away Captive into *Babylon*; yet notwithstanding they shall know that I am their freind, and I am their father still, and that I have not cast them off. The point of Doctrine then that I would commend to you from hence is this,

*Doct.*

*That God doth graciously acknowledge, and own his servants in the day of their dangers and distresses. Psal. 31. 7. Thou hast considered my trouble, thou hast known my soul in adversity. And that is a comfortable Scripture, Ps 22. 24. he hath not despised, nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, neither hath he hid his face from him, but when he cryed unto him he heard him. God doth not abhor, nor despise the affliction of his poor afflicted servants, he doth not hide away his face from them; he doth no look aside as if he regarded them not in the day of their distresses. God owned his people Israel in Egypt, when they were among the Brickilns; when they were*

were making their Pots, when they were poor Bondslaves, *Exod. 4. 22.* saies God there to *Moses Go to Pharaoh and say, Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son even my first born, and therefore let him go.* As if the Lord should say, although *Israel* be amongst the Pots, yet he is my son still, and although he be under Bondage, yet he is my first born still. How passionately and affectionately doth God speak, *Act. 7. 34. I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, the ingemination of the word shewes the earliness of Gods affections, as I may call them, (not that God hath affections, but it is spoken after the manner of men because he doth that which men doe, when their affections and bowels yearn toward those that are in misery) and his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel.*

But for the explication of the Point; It may be demanded.

First, How doth God own and acknowledge his people in the day of their dangers and distresses.

And

And then secondly, why doth he own them?

First, How doth God own them.

I answer, God owns them three waies.

First, By being present with them.

Secondly, By supporting of them.

And thirdly, By delivering them.

First, God owns his people, in the day of their distresses, by being present with them. Psal. 91. 15. *He shall call upon me, and I will answer him, I will be with him in trouble.* And Isa. 43. 2. *When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the Rivers they shall not overflow thee, when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.* So in Isa. 63. 9. *In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the Angel of his presence saved them.* If Joseph be in Prison, God will be with him there. If Job be on the dunghil, God will be with him there. If Jeremiah be in the dungeon, God will

will be with him there. If *Daniel* be in the Lions-den, God will be with him there. Nay when his Children pass through the valley of the shadow of death, when they pass as it were by the gates of hell, yet notwithstanding his rod and his staff do then comfort them; as he once said, thy presence O Lord it can sweeten *Lawrence* his Grid-iron; the presence of God, it can turn a Prison into a Pallace, it can turn a very hell into a heaven; what makes heaven to be heaven but Gods presence, and what makes hell to be hell but Gods absence? Now for God to be present thus with his people, in their trouble, this is one way of his owning them.

Secondly, God doth own his people in their distresses, by supporting them, by upholding them with the right hand of his righteousness, that their burthens shall not be too heavy for them, but either he will proportion their burthens to their shoulders, or their shoulders to their burthens, that they shall stand under



## 84. Gods great care of his good People

under them. Isa. 41. 10. Fear thou not for I am with thee, be not dismayed for I am thy God, I will strengthen thee, yea I will help thee, yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. And this is that which David found in his own experience, Psal. 94. 17, 18, 19. Unless the Lord had been my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence; when I said my foot slippeth, thy mercy O Lord held me up: In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts refresh my soul. It is storied of one Theodorus whom Julian the Apostate caused to be racked and tortured, and put to extreame torments, that in the midst of his torments there was an Angel (as Theodoret tells the story) in the likeness of a young man that stood by him, and with a linnen cloath did wipe the sweat from off him, and poured cool water upon his vexed and tortured limbs, and by that means did refresh and comfort him: and our blessed Saviour (you know) in that agony when he sweat drops of blood, had an Angel with him to comfort

comfort him; God knows how to comfort and support his Children, and to stand by them in the greatest of their distresses, and so he owns them.

And then thirdly, God owns his Children by delivering them out of all their distresses, Psal. 34. 19. *Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.* And that is a very remarkable Scripture Jeremiah 50. 33. 34. *Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the Children of Israel, and the Children of Judah were oppressed together, and all that took them Captives held them fast, they refused to let them go, but their redeemer is strong, the Lord of hosts is his Name he shall thorowly plead their cause, that he may give rest unto the Land, and disquiet the inhabitants of Babylon.* God will not alwaies let the rod of the wicked rest upon the lot of the righteous. And thus you see that God owns his people in their distresses.

But then why doth he own them? The reason is this briefly, because his children are very dear unto him, he

he looks upon them as his *jewels*, Mal. 3. 17. (a text you know I have heretofore opened unto you) he looks upon them as his precious ones, as the dearly beloved of his soul, he looks upon them as the apple of his own eye, and therefore no change of condition in his children can make God change his love and affections towards them, and though God may sometimes cast them into the furnace of affliction, it is onely to purge away their dross, and he loves them when in the fire as well as when they are out of it, and he is with them and stands by them all the while. The use of this point is,

First, By way of Instruction. We should take notice of the faithfulness of God, and admire it, and bless him for it. God is a faithful God, he is a never changing friend; alas we see amongst men friends are false and fickle, and unfaithfull, they deal with us many times as *Job* complains his friends did. *My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook.* Job 6. 15. a Brook that in the winter time hath rain enough, yet in the summer

summer time, when the cattle stand in most need of water, then all the Brook is dried up; so saies he, my friends deal deceitfully with me, in the times of my distress and danger, and are then the furthest of all from me; and so *David* complains, *Psal. 38. 11. My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore, and my kinsmen stand afar off.* But God is not such a friend, God is never nearer to us, than when trouble is near; God never speaks so kindly so comfortably, to the hearts of his children, as he doth when he brings them into a Wilderness, *Hos. 2. 14. Therefore behold I will allure her, and bring her into the Wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.* When God brings us into the worst condition, he is then the best God unto us; when we are in the saddest condition, we have many times the sweetest communion with our God. *Psal. 73. 26. saies David, My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever.* And that is a very comfortable passage of  
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the Psalmist, Psalm 142. 3, 4, 5. When my Spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my paths: When I was almost at my wits end ready to sink down in sorrow, then thou tookest notice of me: And I looked (saies he) on my right hand and beheld, but there was no man that would know me; refuge failed me, no man cared for my soul, then I cryed unto thee O Lord and said, thou art my refuge and my portion in the Land of the living. A wonderfull comfortable passage, and O! why do not we break out into admiration and say? O! God who, is like unto thee? who so loving a God, who so faithfull a God, who so tender hearted and compassionate a Father as thou art, that ever ownest thy children when they have most need of thee!

*Use 2.*

But then secondly, Another Use I would make of this Point is this, Doth God own us in the day of our fears, and streights, and in the day of our dangers and distresses; and doth God own us before our enemies, then it should teach us to  
own



own God before his enemies, to acknowledge him before the worst of men, and in the worst of times.

First, We should acknowledge God before the worst of men, before Papists, or Atheists, or Hereticks, or Seducers, or Hypocrites, or Apostates, or scorers of Religion; for these are the worst of his enemies. To own God before his friends, this is no great matter, there is no tryall in that, because there is no opposition; but see what our Saviour saies, *Mar. 8. 38. Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me, and of my words in this adulterous and sinfull generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy Angels.* Our Saviour doth not say, whosoever shall be ashamed of me before a gracious generation, for none will be ashamed of Christ then; but whosoever shall be ashamed of me before an adulterous generation. Though the men with whom we converse, and amongst whom we live, be never so base, and vile, though they be never

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ver such backsliding, provoking, scandalous, prophane wretches, and such as are opposers of God, his truth and Gospel; yet our Saviour looks we should own him before these men, even before an adulterous generation, else he will not own us at the great and dreadfull day of his appearing. Thus you shall see *Paul* owned *Jesus Christ* before *Nero*, that bloody Monster of men, *2 Tim. 4. 16.* *At my first answer no man stood with me.* That is, when he appeared before *Nero*; yet notwithstanding *Paul* stood for God then; and God stood by *Paul*. Thus *Peter & John* owned *Jesus Christ* before *Annas*, and *Caiphas*, and before the Priest, and Rulers, and all those that were the desperate enemies, of the Gospel, though they threatned, and imprisoned them.

*Act. 4. 20.*

*We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.*

And then God looks that we should own him, not onely before the worst of men, but in the worst of times; to own God in good times it is no great matter, Hypocrites

pocrites can own God in good times, but God looks we should own him in times of apostacy, when Religion growes out of credit; when it is lookt upon as madness, as Morositie, as Hypocrisie, and I know not what. God owns us when others forsake us, and therefore God looks that we should own him when others forsake him. Thus you shall see *Elijah* did, *1 Kin. 19. 10.* when there was such a generall apostacy, that he thought there had not been a godly man left in *Israel* besides himself; saies he, *I onely am left, yet notwithstanding I have been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts.* And very jealous indeed he was, for at one time he slew, and caused to be slain, no lesse than four hundred of *Jesabels* false Prophets. I confess that act of *Elijahs* was an extraordinary act, and much like that of *Phinehas*, one of the High Priests, that slew *Zimry*, and *Cozby* in his zeal for God, *Numb. 25. 8.* Doubtless this act of *Phinehas*, was also an extraordinary act, and by Divine in-

*1 Kin. 18.*  
40.

strict, as judicious *Calvin* well observes; but though their actions be not to be imitated, yet their zeal is worthy imitation: for *Elijah* owned God when none stood by him.

ἐκπαυρῶ-  
ζέμεται.

And as we should own God in times of apostacy, so in times of opposition. When there is a desperate contention against the truth, we should earnestly contend, *contend* as in an agony, for the truth; as I once opened that Text to you, the Epistle of *St Jude* vers. 3. The more violent men are against the truth, the more valiant we should be for it; and the more outrageous, others are in wayes of sin, the more courageous should we be in wayes of holiness; the more others oppose Religion, and Reformation, and the power of godliness, the more should we hold forth the word of truth; and hold fast the word of life, by an undaunted resolution. Thus the Prophet *Jeremiah* did, *Jeremi.* 6. 10, 11. *The word of the Lord is to them a reproach* (saies he) *They have no delight in it, therefore*

*I am full of the fury of the Lord, I am weary with holding in, and A&T. 17. 16. St Pauls Spirit was stirred, it waxed hot within him, when he saw the Athenians, wholly given to Idolatry.*

And God looks we should own him and his cause, not onely in times of apostacy, and in times of contention, and opposition against the truth, but in times of danger and persecution, if he should call us to suffer for it. Thus did the Martyrs, and O ! that some of that holy fire, and zeal of love to God ; that burnt in their breasts, were kindled in the hearts of every one of us. The godly Martyrs in the Primitive times, and in Queen *Maries* daies, carried the truth as it were in their armes, in the midst of accusations, persecutions, flanders, reproaches, and in the defence of the truth, they were contented to passe through honour, and dishonour, through evil report, and good report ; Nay through bonds, and imprisonments, through racks and whips, through fire, and flames ; and all the ma-

lice and mischief that earth, and hell could invent, and all the power that the devil, and darkness could raise against them could not quench, but rather kindled their zeal, O that we had (I say) some of those sparks that burnt in their breasts. Many there are that seem to own God and Religion, and his cause, and truth in calme and quiet times, when their profession costs them nothing: but as those Jews that one day cryed *Hosanna, blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord*, the next day cryed, *Crucifie him, Crucifie him, away with him, away with him.* So likewise the very same professors, if they be not found in the faith, that cry up Religion in times of prosperity, will cry down Religion in times of adversity. Many there are that will be contented to follow Christ to Mount *Olivet*; but they will not follow him to Mount *Calvarist*, to suffer any thing with him, or indure any thing for him; no, Christ shall suffer, and his cause, and truth shall suffer, and Religion, and reformation,

tion, and all shall suffer rather than they will suffer with him. As the King of Navarre, once said to Beza; *In matters of Religion, and Reformation, I will lanch no farther into the Sea, than I may be sure to return safe back again to Land.* O! this is the temper of many men, but let it not be ours; let us be rowing though it be against wind, and tide; let us resolve with David, Psal. 119. 31. *I will stick unto thy testimonies.* I am glewed unto thy truth; so the Hebrew word signifies, so glewed that nothing shall draw me off, or לִקְחָתִי drive me from it, David was one that did indeed stick unto the word of God admirably; Sometimes he was derided, and scorned for the truth, Psal. 119. 51. *The proud have had me greatly in derision, yet have I not declined from thy Law;* and Psal. 69. 12. *The drunkards made a song of him, yet did he not decline from the Law of God;* sometimes again he was plundered and spoiled, and lost much of his estate for sticking to the truth, Psal. 119. 61. *The bands of the wicked have*

E 4. robbed



robbed me, yet have I not forgotten thy Law. And he was not onely derided, and scorned, and plundered, but he was persecuted too; ver. 161. *Princes have persecuted me without a cause, but my heart stands in awe of thy word*: here was a man that stuck to God and his truth whatsoever he suffered. And O that the same resolution were fixed in our hearts that was in the heart of holy Paul, 2 Cor. 13. 8. *We can do nothing against the truth but for the truth*. As if he should say, though all the world speak against the truth; though they should band and binde themselves against it, yet we cannot speak against the truth, but must speak for it, and plead for it, and die for it, if we be called to it. This is to own God when he owns us; and if we can thus own God, and his cause and truth, certainly we shall never be losers by him, though for the present we may be losers for him, for we serve a Master that will make up all our losses. And this is the second Use.

And thirdly, (to shut up this Point

Point with a word of Consolation)  
 Doth God acknowledge and own  
 his people in the day of their dan-  
 gers and distresses? then here is a  
 word of unspeakable comfort to all  
 that are true *Israelites*, true profes-  
 sors, those that stick to God, and his  
 truth and testimonies; for if God  
 do own and acknowledge us here on  
 earth, then certainly he will much  
 more own and acknowledge us at  
 the great day of Christs appearing,  
 when the wicked would give the  
 whole world for one smile of his  
 countenance, *when they shall cry to*  
*the mountains to fall on them, and to*  
*the hills to cover them and hide them*  
*from the wrath of the Lamb*; when  
 their hearts shall fail them for fear,  
 and looking for those dreadfull  
 things that are falling on them, saies  
 Christ, even at that time *do you lift*  
*up your heads with joy, for the day*  
*of your redemption draws nigh.* God  
 the Father will own his people at  
 that day, when he will put a diffe-  
 rence between the righteous and  
 the wicked, between them that fear  
 him, and them that fear him not;

Luke 23.  
30.

Luke 21.  
26, 28.

Mal. 3. 18.

and will say as in Isa. 65. 13, 14.  
*Behold my servants shall eat but ye  
 shall be hungry, behold my servants  
 shall drink but ye shall be thirsty,  
 behold my servants shall rejoyce  
 but ye shall be ashamed, behold my  
 servants shall sing for joy of heart,  
 but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart,  
 and howl for vexation of spirit.*

And as God the Father will own  
 them, so Jesus Christ will own them  
 at that great day. *Matth. 10. 32.*  
*Who so ever therefore shall confess me  
 before men, him will I confess also  
 before my Father which is in heaven,*

*Rev. 3. 5. and he that overcomes, I will confess  
 his name before my Father and before  
 his holy Angels.* Jesus Christ at that  
 great day will visibly own all his  
 servants that have owned him, and  
 owned his cause, and will say, Fa-  
 ther, these are my servants, these  
 are my friends, these are my Chil-  
 dren, nay these are my Jewels;  
*Mat. 25.* when I was hungry in my members,  
*35, 36.* they fed me; when I was thirsty  
 they gave me drink; when I was  
 naked in my poor members on  
 earth, they clothed me; when I was  
 sick

sick they visited me; when I was in  
prison they came and relieved me: Mat. 23.  
35, 36.

and Father here is a man that laid  
down his estate for me, and was  
content to be plundered and spoyled  
so he might but keep his integrity:  
and here is another lost his credit  
for me, and was content to be revil-  
led and reproached, and to be  
counted the off-scouring of all  
things for me: nay here is another  
laid down his very life for me; he  
loved not his life to the death, but  
was contented to part with his life  
rather than to part with the peace  
of a good conscience. Father, all  
these have stuck to me; these are  
they that have borne me company,  
and have continued with me in the  
times of my temptations; they have  
stood to me in the hour of tryal, and  
have kept thy Word; they have  
kept their integrity and their gar- Luke 21;  
28.  
ments clean; therefore Father these John 17.  
6, 9, 10.  
are thine: nay, these are mine, for  
mine are thine, and thine are mine,  
and I am glorified in them: they  
have glorified me, and let them be  
glorified with me: *Father I will that*

*these*

ver. 24.

those whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory. O what an unspeakable comfort will this be to all you (I say) that are willing thus to own Jesus Christ, and his cause and truth, though in a sinfull generation, though it be in times of apostacy and opposition of the truth, or in times of trouble and persecution for the truth; if you can own Christ he will own you. And so much for the first thing, by way of comfort, that was tendered to this people, *I will acknowledge them* (saies God) *that are carried away captives of Judah.*

The second particular wherein God speaks to them by way of comfort is this, namely that he had sent them out of this place into the Land of the *Caldeans*; *I have sent them* (saies God,) as if he should say, true indeed *Nebuchadnezzar* carried them away captive, but he was but my instrument, I was the author of their captivity; *Nebuchadnezzar* was the rod wherewith I chastised them, I but it was my hand ruled the rod,

rod. Now the Doctrine I would commend to you from hence is this,

*That whoever are the instruments Doct.*  
of our miseries and calamities, yet God is the author of them. Amos 3.  
6. Shall there be evil in a City and the Lord hath not done it? he speaks not of the evil of sinne (for certainly God is not the author of sinne, that is a blasphemous doctrine to make God the author of sinne) but he speaks of the evil of punishment; and this is the doctrine *Eliphaz* taught *Job*, Job 5.6. Affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground: as if he should say, Do not think O *Job*, that it is chance or Fortune that doth toss or tumble things upside down here below, as if God were an idle spectator in Heaven, and were doing nothing there; no, saies he, but God sits in Heaven, and he is at the sterne and steers all the affairs of this world as it pleaseth him: and all the afflictions that have ever befallen thee, come not by chance, but by the wise disposing hand of God:



God: *Isa. 47. 7.* saies God, *I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create evil, I the Lord do all these things.* And this is the lesson Job had learnt, *Job 1. 21.* *The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away.* The Lord hath taken away, may some say; why was it not the *Sabeans*, and the *Caldeans* that robd Job? they took away his Sheep and Oxen, and they slew his servants with the edg of the sword. I but Job looks not at them, it is the Lord (saies he) that gave me all my riches, and 'tis he that hath taken them all away. And David he had learnt this lesson; *Shimei* railed against him with a black mouth, and said, *Come out, come out thou bloody man and thou man of Belial: Abisshai* would have been avenged of him presently, and would have taken off the head of that dead dog (as he call'd him) no, no, saies David, *The Lord hath sent Shimei to curse David:* and if God hath once said it, who shall say, wherefore hast thou done so.

For the Reason of this Doctrine, (that I may briefly wrap it up because

2Sam. 16.

7.

cause I would not hold you long ) it is this, because God hath an absolute, independent, and unlimited Sovereignty over all creatures in Heaven and earth. This is the lesson God would teach *Jeremiah*, and he sends him to the Potters house to learn it, *Jer.* 18. 2, 3, 4. Go saies God to the Potters house, and I will reach thee a lesson; and *Jeremiah* goes, and he sees the Potter making pots apace, and he no sooner fashions one pot upon the wheel, but he breaks it to pieces presently; and what doth God teach them by this? *O house of Israel* (saies God) cannot I do with you as this Potter with the clay? cannot I make of a piece of clay, one vessel of honour and another of dishonour? cannot I save whom I will, and destroy whom I will? as the clay is in the hands of the Potter, so are ye in my hands *O house of Israel*, verse the 6<sup>th</sup>? and theretore he tellsthem in the 7<sup>th</sup> 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> verses; that it was in his power to do what he pleased; saies he, I can pull down Kingdoms, and I can plant Kingdoms; I can build up

up Kingdoms, and I can throw down Kingdoms and Nations even as I please, like as the Potter can do by the clay. *Nebuchadnezzar* a proud man would not learn this lesson, to know he ruled by God, and that God was the absolute Sovereign of all creatures here below; therefore God sends him to school, not to the Potters house as he did *Jeremiah*, but he sends him to the beasts, and he grazes amongst the Oxen, till he came to know that God ruled amongst the children of men, and after seaven years he had learnt this lesson, and makes an admirable confession, *Daniel 4. 35.* Behold (saies he) this great God doth according to his own will in the army of Heaven, and amongst the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What dost thou?

Let me but briefly apply this Point, and then I will end: I have but three Uses, and I will be very brief in every one of them.

First, By way of Instruction and Admonition. If God be the Author

thor of all the miseries and calamities, that befall us here below: It should then teach us this lesson, to fear this great God that hath the rod in his hand, wherewith he can scourge whom he will, and where and how long he will, O! that you and I could learn to stand in awe of him, and be afraid to sin against him, against him who can send the sword, the famine and the Pestilence, to consume us from off the face of the earth, as it is in the last verse of this 24. Chapter of *Jeremiah*, *I will send the sword, the famine, and the Pestilence among them, till they be consumed from off the Land that I gave unto them, and to their fathers.* So *Jer. 10. 6, 7.* *There is none O Lord like unto thee, thou art great, and thy name is great in might, who would not fear thee O King of Nations.* And *Jer. 15. 22.* *Fear ye not me saith the Lord? will you not tremble at my presence, who have placed the Sand for a girdle to the Sea, by a perpetuall decree that it cannot pass it? What do you not fear me that can chain up that great Monster the Sea in fetters*

Mat. 10.

28.

setters of land? do you not fear me  
 that can toss the earth more easily  
 than you can toss a tennis ball? nay  
 fear ye not me that can cast soul and  
 body into hell fire? When there is  
 a mighty Prince or Potentate, that  
 hath power in his hands, to strip  
 you of your liberties, of your estates,  
 and lives, and he is incensed against  
 you, O! what terrour and tremb-  
 ling takes hold of you, and how  
 do you crouch, and cringe, and  
 comply, and make friends, and stu-  
 dy all the ways that ever you can, to  
 get the favour of that Prince or Po-  
 tentate, as you read Acts 12.20.  
 When *Herod* was highly displeased  
 with the men of *Tyre* and *Sidon*  
 they got *Blasius* the Kings Cham-  
 berlaine to be their friend, and beg-  
 rearms of peace for them. Now art  
 thou afraid of a mortall man, whose  
 breath is in his Nostrils, and art not  
 afraid of the great Creator of heaven  
 and earth Isa. 51. 12. 13. Who art  
 thou that art afraid of a man that  
 shall dy, and of the Son of man which  
 shall be made as grass, and forgettest  
 the Lord thy maker, that hath stretch-

ed

ed forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth. Consider this all you that are great ones, or men of great estates, and therefore think you may bolster up your selves in your wickedness, no, no, know thus much, this great *Jehovah* against whom you sin, he is the great Lord; he is greater than the greatest; it is he that can visit with his anger, and with his fury, and with his indignation poured forth. The Mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burnt up at his presence, yea the world and all that dwell therein who can stand before his indignation, and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks melt before him. It is he that can bind Kings in chains, and Nobles in fetters of iron. It is he that is the Lord of hosts, that hath all creatures in heaven and earth, to avenge his quarrel: It is this great God likewise, that can punish great and small, without respect of persons: and therefore they on whom God bestows great mercies, if they abound in great sins, they shall have great punish-

Nah. 1. 5.  
6. 7.

Psal. 149.  
8.



Potentes  
potentèr pu-  
nienter.

punishment inflicted upon them, as one said, *Mighty men shall be mightily tormented.* O whence is it that we no more fear this great God before whom the rocks melt, nay the devils tremble! Are our hearts harder than rocks? Are we more fearless than devils? Stand in awe then, and sin not; most men sin and tremble not, but do you tremble and sin not. Consider we are all in the hands of this great God, as a little fly in the paw of a roaring lion; we are all before him as clay in the hands of the Potter; nay we are all before him as dry stubble before the consuming fire. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he? Consider what advantage he hath against us, and consider also what dependance we have upon him, and then learn to fear him, and to stand in awe of him. This is the first Use: it is the great God that hath the rod in his hand, and he is the Author of all the miseries that come upon us, therefore let us tremble before him.

The second Use is for instruction,  
and

and admonition; If God be the author of all the miserie that befalls us, then let us take off our eyes from instruments, and second causes; look not so much at man, at the instruments of our misery, but look upon God who is the author of our misery. O that every one of us could but say as that good woman *Naomi*, *Ruth* 1. 13. saies she, *the hand of the Lord is gone out against me.* Could we but look at God the author, more than at the instruments of our misery, we should have great advantage by it. You will say what advantage; there is a fourfold advantage we shall have by it.

First, This will work the sweet effect of contentment and quietation in our hearts; it will mecken, and quiet, and calme our spirits, that we shall not fret and fume at any dispensation of God, though it seem never so harsh and severe. *Psal.* 39. 9. *I was dumb, and opened not my mouth because thou didst it.* and *1 Sam.* 3. 18. saies *Eli* (when a heavy message came to him) *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.*

Secondly,

Secondly, This will root out that spirit of revenge that usually is in our hearts, when they are burning and boyling against those that are the instruments of our misery. We are many times like the Dog that snarles at the stone, and looks not at the hand that cast it; so we snarl, and fret, and boyl in our spirits, against those who are the instruments of our troubles; whereas did we but look at the hand that cast the stone, it would take the spirit of revenge out of our hearts. Such a spirit was in *David*, as I shewed you even now, he looked not at *Shimei* cursing him, but at God that bid him curse, and therefore would not be revenged on *Shimei*. Such a Spirit was in *Joseph* Gen. 45. 8. Saies he to his brethren, *It was not you that sent me hither, but God.* Why, may some say, it was his brethren, for did not they sell *Joseph* to the *Ismaelites*, and by that means was he not carried into *Egypt*? I but *Joseph* looks not to the instruments, but to God; and therefore though his brethren had misgiving thoughts, surely

surely our brother will remember this, and be avenged on us for all the wrong we did him, yet *Joseph* answers them otherwise, 'tis true saies he, *you intended evil to me, but God turned it for good*; therefore be not troubled, I have no revenge in my heart; and fear not, for I will nourish you, and your little ones. He lookt at God in all. Gen. 50. 15.

And Thirdly, this will provoke us to repentance, and to return to God that smites us. *Hos. 6. 1. Come and let us return unto the Lord, for he hath torn, and he will heal us, he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.* As in the case of mercies, if we do not look upon God as the author of our mercies, we can never be thankfull and improve them to his Glory. So likewise in the case of afflictions, if we look not upon God, as the Author of our miseries, we can never be penitent, and humble.

Fourthly, We shall have this advantage also; this will work our hearts to a patient and quiet waiting upon

## 112 Gods great care of his good People

upon God, with faith and confidence for deliverance. 2 King. 6.

33. you read of King Jehoram, a prophane King, yet he taught a true doctrine, saies he, *this evil is of the Lord*. A true Doctrine, but he made a false use and application of it, *therefore why should I wait upon him any longer*.

For the reason holds strong on the contrary side; this evil is from the Lord, therefore I should wait upon him for ever. This is a good conclusion; for that God that hath smitten us will heal us, if we wait upon him; though he hide his face for a little while, yet he will not always hide his face; and though he contend for a little while, yet he will not contend for ever, lest the spirit which he hath made should faile before him.

Isa. 57.

16. a little while, yet he will not contend for ever, lest the spirit which he hath made should faile before him.

The third and last Use is for consolation; Is God the Author of all the miseries and calamities that befall us, then it serves for the comfort of the people of God in this, that God can order and overrule, and he can bridle and restrain wicked

and

and ungodly men, in all their enterprises, in all their plots and projects, and in all their purposes and designs, that they have against his people, because he is the Author whoever be the instruments; all wicked men are but the rod in his hand, *O Assyrian the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation,* Isa. 10. 5. and if there were twenty rods in a room, and never a hand to use one of them, we would not be afraid of them, the rod can do nothing unless there be a hand to use it, instruments can do nothing if God do not make use of them, or if he do restrain them. *God can still the raging of the sea, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people,* Psal. 65. 7. and these two are joynted together, the raging of the Sea, and the tumult of the people; implying thus much, that though people should rage against Gods servants, as much as the waves of the Sea, yet God can restrain them; he that saies to the waves, thus far shall ye go and no further, there



Psa. 31. 15.

Ps. 115. 7.

shall your proud waves be stayed, he can say to the rage and fury of the greatest oppressours upon earth, thus far shall ye go and no further; that God that doth whatsoever pleaseth him in heaven and earth, he will order things so that we may be sure though his Church be oppressed, yet it shall not be supressed, and if he can do whatsoever pleaseth him, then the enemies of the Church cannot do whatsoever pleaseth them. My times are in thy hands saies *David*: truly if the times of our troubles were in our own hands the rod would be taken away too soon, and if our times were in our enemies hands, our afflictions would be too long, but now because our times are in Gods hands, therefore he will order and over-rule both for time and manner, and measure, so as may make most for the glory of his own Name, and for our comfort, that though he do humble us, and prove us, yet it is, that he may do us good in the latter end.

And this leads me to the third

and

and last particular in the Text, The third comfort that is tendered to these poor Captives, saies God here, *I have sent them out of this place into the Land of the Caldeans, but it is for their good, for their spirituall benefit, and advantage.* But of that God willing you shall hear in the after noon, so much shall serve for this time.

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Part 2 SERMON

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# SERMON IV.

Jeremiah Chap. 24. Verse 5.

*Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Like these good Figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the Land of the Caldeans for their good.*



Have spoken to this Text ( as you may remember ) in three Sermons, I will by Gods assistance finish it at this time.

I have done with the explication of the Type, *like these good Figs*, and am now upon the application if it; and the application is wholly comfortable, and that in three respects.

First,

First, God tels them that he would acknowledge them that were carried away Captive of Judah.

And secondly, That he himself had sent them into the Land of the *Caldeans*: and these two I have dispatched.

I come now to the third and last particular, and that which is most remarkable in the Text, and that is, that God doth assure them here, that this their captivity should be for their good, for their spirituall profit and advantage; *I have sent them out of this place into the Land of the Caldeans for their good.* And the Point of Doctrine, I would commend to you from hence is this,

*That God in the severest of his providences, and the sharpest afflictions that his people meet withall, doth yet intend their spirituall good.* To be carried captive into *Babylon*, doubtless it was a very severe providence and a very sharp affliction, if you consider either the antecedents of it, or the consequents of it; the antecedents of it, what went before;

Doct.

why blood and slaughter, and the loss of many mens lives; or if you consider also the consequents of it, what followed their captivitie, why the enslaving of their persons, the loss of their estates, the leaving of their Country, and the Land of their nativity; the scorns and reproaches, the exultations and triumphs of their adversaries that would be ready to trample upon their misery, whereas misery should be a loadstone for mercy, and not a footstool for pride to trample upon; but yet this they must look for, to be trampled upon and triumpht over by their insulting adversaries: as for example, the *Edomites* said in the day of *Jerusalem* (that is, in the day of *Jerusalem*s misery,) *Down with it, down with it even to the ground*, *Psal. 137. 7.* Yea they rejoyced over the Children of *Judah* in the day of their destruction and they spake proudly in the day of their distress, as it is in the Prophecie of *Obadiab*, v. 12. So likewise the *Amonites*, you shall see how they insulted over them, when they had

had carried them Captive, Ezek. 26. 6. saies God, Thou hast clapped thine hands, and stamped with the feet, and rejoyced in heart with all thy despite against the Land of Israel, Insomuch that the people of God complain, Psalm 44. 13. O Lord thou makest us a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and a derision to them that are round about us. These were the wofull consequences of that Captivitie, and yet, God saies notwithstanding he did intend their spirituall good. This is that which God tels them, Jer. 32. 41. For I will rejoyce over you to do you good, and I will plant you in this Land assuredly, with my whole heart, and with my whole soul. And how many testimonies might I produce to this purpose, that God in the severest of his dispensations, doth yet intend his Childrens good, Dut. 8. 15, 16. When he led thee through that great and terrible Wilderness, wherein were fiery Serpents, and Scorpions, and drought, where there was no water &c. It was that he might humble thee and prove thee, that he might do thee



good at thy latter end. And Rom. 8, 28. 'tis a known Scripture, and as comfortable a Scripture as any in all the Book of God, We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. And Hebr. 12. 10. He chastiseth us for our profit that we might be partakers of his holiness. And hear but David out of his own experience, Psal. 119. 71, 75, v. It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes, and I know O Lord that in very faithfulness thou hast afflicted me.

But for the better confirmation, and explication of this truth (because it is a truth that flesh and blood will hardly believe, that God in his severest providences should intend our good) There are these three queries that would be satisfied.

First, What good it is that God doth intend in his severest providences towards his Children?

And secondly, Who they are that shall experimentally find this Doctrine verified of them?

And

And thirdly, How or with what limitation this Doctrine must be understood ?

First, What good it is that God doth intend his people? Briefly there is a fourfold good, that God intends unto his people in his corrections and chastisements, and in the wayes of his severity towards them.

1. In reference to their sins. 2<sup>d</sup> In reference to their graces. 3<sup>d</sup> In reference to their present comforts. 4<sup>th</sup> In reference to their future hopes.

First, Inreference to their sins, God intends a fourfold good ;

1. To prevent sin. 2<sup>d</sup> To discover sin. 3<sup>d</sup> To imbitter sin. And 4<sup>th</sup> To destroy sin.

First, God in reference to the sins of his people intends this good to them, namely to prevent sin: If Saint *Paul*, such a heavenly man, or an earthly Angel (as one calls him) had need of a thorne in his flesh, to prevent that spirituall pride, and self exalcation, that otherwise he might have fallen into? O How much more have we need of some  
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affliction, to prevent thoſe ſins that  
 otherwiſe we might run into? That  
 as Phyſicians tell us, they have  
 two ſorts of medecines, They  
 have Preventing Phyſick, as well  
 as healing Phyſick; ſo God makes  
 afflictions to be preventing Phy-  
 ſick, as well as healing Phyſick,  
 unto his own Children. And as  
*Themistocles* ſaid in the like caſe,  
*If I had not been undone I had*  
*been undone;* So may many a child  
 of God ſay; if God had not hedged  
 up my way with Thornes, I had run  
 poſt to the pit of hell, and had ruſhed  
 upon the rock of my own ruin long  
 before this time. That is one  
 good in reference to ſin to prevent  
 it.

Secondly, Another good God in-  
 tends his people by afflictions, in  
 reference to their ſin, is to diſcover  
 it; in ſtanding waters you cannot  
 ſee the mud that lies at the bottom  
 of the Pool; but when once the  
 water is removed, then the mud is  
 diſcovered. So here, while we are  
 at peace, and eaſe, in times of pro-  
 ſperity, and whiles we are not emp-  
 tied

tied from vessel to vessel, we are settled upon our lees, as 'tis said of *Moab*, and the dregs and mud of our corruptions are not discovered; but now when we are emptied from vessel to vessel, that is, emptied of our outward enjoyments, and of our outward comforts, and God begins to take the rod into his hand, then he makes us reflect upon our selves, and to say as *Job* did in the day of his distress, *Job* 13. 23, 24. *Make me to know my transgression and my sin.* Remarkable is that speech of the *Shunamitish* woman unto *Elijah* 1 King. 17. 18. *Art thou come to call my sin to remembrance and to slay my son?* Pray marke, the death of her son made her reflect upon her sin, she would not have called her sin to remembrance, but that her son was now ready to be taken away; affliction it is a sharp tyrant, I but it is a just judge, it represents our condition truly to us, and lets us see the inside of our selves, it doth discover self to self: a man never comes to know himself, and to know the plague of his own heart,

heart, so well as when the rod of God is upon his back; that is a second good afflictions work in reference to sin, to discover it.

And thirdly, God intends this good to his people in reference to sin, to imbitter it, that in the bitterness of sorrow, we may tast the bitterness of sin, that is the cause of sorrow, that we may see and say as in *Jerem. 2. 19.* *'Tis an evill and bitter thing, that we have forsaken the Lord our God, and that his fear hath not been in us.* And brethren, sin it is a very bitter thing, nay sin is bitterness it self; *Hos. 12. 14.* *Ephraim hath provoked him to anger most bitterly,* in the Hebrew it is *תמררתי*, *Ephraim hath provoked him with bitterneffes:* Sin it is that which caused the Lord Jesus Christ to drink that bitter cup of trembling. It would have made all the men on earth, nay all the Angels in heaven to have sunk under the burden of that wrath that he drunk of, so that sin is I say a bitter thing, and therefore God afflicts us, to imbitter sin to us, and that we should be

ip.

in bitterness for sin as a man is in  
bitterness for the loss of an only Zech. 12.  
childe. 10.

- And then fourthly, In reference  
to sin, God afflicts us to destroy  
sin, to make a separation between  
sin and the soul. A sucking child  
that loves the mothers breast, yet  
(you know) when Worm-wood is  
laid upon the breast, then the child  
loaths it, and is willing to leave it,  
and it becomes but a dead breast  
to him, though before he delighted  
in it. So likewise, when God is  
pleased to imbitter sin, he doth as  
it were kill the sin to us, and makes  
us willing to leave it, though be-  
fore we did dearly love it; and in-  
deed it is but fit and equall, that that  
sin which hath been contracted with  
joy, should be dissolved with sor-  
row; sin is so rooted, and settled in  
the heart, that a separation cannot  
be made without a great deal of  
sorrow; but when once we feel  
the smart of sin, then we can say  
with holy Job, *That which I know* Job 34.  
*not, teach thou me; and if I have* 32.  
*done iniquity, I will do no more.*  
And



And (saies he) Once have I spoken,  
 Job 40. 5. but I will not answer; yea twice,  
 but I will proceed no farther. This  
 then is the first Good God in-  
 tends his Children in the seve-  
 rest of his providences, in refe-  
 rence to sin, to prevent it, disco-  
 ver it, imbitter it, and destroy  
 it, *boon mi-tye noly (word not)*

But then secondly, God intends  
 another good unto his people in  
 the severest of his providences, in re-  
 ference to their graces, both to try  
 their graces, and likewise to exer-  
 cise their graces. *midmi or bely*

First, To try their graces; God  
 he sometimes proves and tries his  
 Children, whether they be legiti-  
 mate Children, or whether they  
 be bastards, yea or no, *Psal. 66.*  
*10. For thou O God hast proved us,*  
*thou hast tryed us, as silver is tryed.*  
*And Hebr. 12. 8. If yea be without*  
*chastisement, whereof all are par-*  
*takers, than are ye bastards, and*  
*not sons.* As they say of the Eagle,  
 shee tries her young ones, by ser-  
 ting their eyes against the bright  
 and scorching beames of the Sun  
*and*

and if they cannot endure those scorching beames, she rejects them as spurious, and as a bastardly brood. So God sometimes tries his Children, to see whether they will be constant, or no, and whether they be his own Children, or bastards. And so he tries their graces whether they be golden graces.

*Re v. 3. 18. I counsell thee to buy of me gold, tryed in the fire.* 'Tis a Text

I once opened to you, and I shewed you by gold there, is ment the golden graces of the Spirit of God: and pray mark, our Saviour would have such gold as is tryed in the fire; implying thus much, that our graces are not true graces, unless they be able to hold out in the day of tryall, and tribulation; gold (you know) will endure the fire: The Apostle speaking of our faith, *1 Pet. 1. 7.* saies *The very tryall of it is much more precious then gold that perisheth.* And if the tryall of it be so precious, what will the victory, or conquest of it be? As one saies, *Some vertues, and graces, they are like Stars that shine*

*shine not in the day time of prosperity, but shine onely in the night of adversity. We had never known Jobs patience, had not we known Jobs sufferings. As their is Honey you know in the comb, but it comes not out usually till it be prest: and as there is sweet water in the Rose leaf, but it comes not out till it be fired; and as the strength of a Tower is not known till an assault, and battery be made against it; So there are many graces in a Christian that will never be discovered till the day of affliction.*

*And as the Lord afflicts us for the tryall of our graces; so likewise for the exercise of our graces; faith would not be exercised, were it not for afflictions, We know not what to doe, but our eyes are toward thee, 2 Chron. 20. 12. And patience would not be exercised were it not for afflictions, and therefore the Apostle saith Tribulations worke patience. And obedience would not be exercised were it not for afflictions; it is said of our Saviour, that*

Rom. 5. 3.

Hebr. 5. 8.

*He learnt obedience by the things which*

which he suffered. A man trained up in the school of affliction will gain more good by one Sermon than another will gain by ten, for in times of prosperity, we usually have a deafe ear; some truths we understand not, others we believe not, we kick at some truths and fret at others; but affliction opens the ear for discipline. And so fervent prayer would not be exercised were it not for afflictions Job 36. 10.

*Isa. 26. 16. Lord in trouble have they visited thee; they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them; They prayed to purpose then.*

A man may pray in times of prosperity, but he seldome pouers out a prayer till affliction comes; as One saies, *Prayer without afflictions is but like a bird without wings.* 'Tis said of our bless'd Saviour, when he was in an agonie he prayed a great deal the more earnestly; So that affliction adds much to the grace of prayer. And our sympathy likewise towards our bretheren, would not be exercised, like afflictions work like affections; neither wou'd our fear of

of the great and holy name of God be exercised; so that afflictions are both for the tryall and for the exercises of our graces.

Thirdly, Another good God intends by afflictions, is in reference to our present comforts and enjoyments, that we may not surfer upon the luscious contentments here below; therefore in the midst of our comforts, God gives us some crosses to diet us, as in the midst of our crosses he gives us some comforts to support us; the Lord knows that we have weak heads, and are not able to bear a prosperous estate without some bitter ingredient. If any of you have a Child, that hath but a weak head, and he is drinking wine, & one comes and mingles a little water with the wine, you thank him for it, because your poor Child is not able to bear strong drink, & therefore it is a great favour to have some water mingled with it. God I say sees that we are not able to bear a prosperous estate, and therefore it is a great mercie that he mingles some affliction with it, and there-  
by

by imbibers our comforts, and so seasons our joys, that we may not surfeit with them; and indeed one main end, that God aims at in all our afflictions, is to imbitter all outward things to us, that himself alone may be sweet to our poor souls. God would not have us set our hearts upon things here below, he would not have these outward comforts to steal away our hearts, as *Absalom* stole away the hearts of the people, nor would he have us say as *Peter* did, it is good being here, or to set up our staff here, but to be willing to part with what we do enjoy, and to condemn it in comparison of what we do expect. That is a third thing in reference to our present comforts.

Fourthly, Another good God intends likewise, is in reference to our future hopes, for these afflictions, these severe dispensations of his providence, they are both the way to Glory, and they work out our Glory; they are the way to Glory, Luke 24. 26. *Ought not Christ to have suffered these things,*  
and



and so to enter into his Glory. What hath the head gone that way, and must not the members go the same way also. Nay they work out our Glory, 2 Cor 4. 17. *for our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternall weight of Glory.* Afflictions they are but the file wherewith God doth polish and square us, that we may be fit stones in his spirituall building. Thus you see the first thing opened unto you, what Good God intends, in the severest of his dispensations.

But secondly, Who are they to whom God intends this good, certainly God doth not intend it unto all Figs, he never intended it to the wicked, but he intends it to those that are good Figs as it is here in the text.

I but how shall we do to know we are good Figs? I gave you three Characters you may remember the last Lords day, let me very briefly give you but three more now, that so you may know whether you be those good Figs to whom

whom this promise belongs, that all the severe dispensations of God shall be for your good.

First, If you be upright in heart Psal. 125.4. *Do good O Lord unto those that be good,* I but who are they, he tels you in the next words, *to them that are upright in their hearts.* If you be good not only in appearance but good in proof, if you be good in reality, for you know rotten Figs may make as fair a shew as the best Figs, they may be as big as the best, and possibly of as good a colour, I but yet they are rotten within. If you have not only an outward profession, for that is an easie matter; but if with your outward profession, and giving up of your names to Christ, you joyn an inward submission, and give up your hearts to Christ, that you *obey from the heart*, as it is Rom.6.17. then are you these good Figs to whom God intends good in all your afflictions.

Secondly, If you have a filial fear of God, and can fear him for his goodness, mark that text Jer.32.40,41. *Saies God, I will put my fear*

fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from me ; And then saies he, *I will rejoyce over them to do them good, with my whole heart, and with my whole soul.* If God have put this fear into your hearts, and this fear is a fountain of life, to cause you to depart from the snares of death, then are you these good Figs.

Thirdly, If you be of the number of those that love God, and are called according to his purpose; For that is set down *Rom. 8. 28. And we know that all things worke together for good, to them that love God, and are called according to his purpose.* If you love his ordinances, and love his Saints and children, and love his presence, if you love him for himself, and delight in him, and desire him only, that you can say, none but thy self O Lord, can give my soul satisfaction; and can say with *Luther, Do not put me off with these earthly comforts and contentments : It is not an housefull of Gold and Silver, that I can take up with, but I must*

must have thy self, and the smiles of thy face, and the discoveries of thy love, and nothing else. And if you are called, according to his purpose, that is, not only outwardly called by his word (for so many are called but few are chosen) but inwardly called by his Spirit, for you must know this promise doth not belong to every one that is outwardly called on; a man may be outwardly called, but yet not effectually called; there is an outward ordinary generall invitation that a wicked man may have, when the Spirit of God knocks at his heart by his word, by his mercies, by afflictions, and by the examples of others, and he stifles all the motions of the Spirit, and rejects the offers and tenders of his Grace, now to have onely this Generall invitation, it is not to be truly called, for so the Spirit knocks often at the doores of your hearts in many a Sermon, and in many a correction, and in many purposes of heart; I but now if you are called by the effectuall operation of the Spirit of God, that the Spirit of God

Mat. 22.  
14.

God not onely knocks but unlocks the doors of your hearts, and makes you willing to accept the invitations of his grace, and to give entertainment unto Christ, and you can say come Lord Jesus into my heart, and rule in me as thou pleatest, when he so calls, that you hear his voyce, and when he saies *Seek ye my face*, thy heart answers, *Lord thy face I will seek, Come unto me* (saies Christ) *all ye that labour and are heavy laden*, Math. 11. 28. And the heart returns eccho, come, I would come to thee O blessed Saviour upon my hands and knees, I would come with all my soul: when the Spirit of God saies, this is the way, this is the way of holinesse, this is the way of strictnesse, and purity, so much spoken against every where: Is this the way saies a poor soul: O I would walk in it, that I might find rest to my soul, and I would submit to the Government of Jesus Christ and be as willing to have him my Ruler as my Redeemer, if thou lovest God, and hast chosen him for thy portion, and art thus called

called, and returnest an echo to the voice of Christ, and submits to his Government; this is a certain evidence thou art in the number of those the Text here speaks of, whom God intends good to in his severest dispensations. That is the second thing by way of explication.

Thirdly, With what limitations must this be understood, that God in his severest providences intends his peoples good? There are but these two limitations I will give you, and then I will apply all.

First, When 'tis said God intends his peoples good, you must understand it thus; That this good is not presently, and all at once effected, but it is by degrees. It may be for the present, thou findest no benefit at all by thy afflictions; but thy heart in thy own apprehension is rather made harder, and thou sits down in a disconsolate despondency, and dost not see how such a passage of providence workes for thy good at all; I but mark what the end will be; look not onely at the beginning of a work, (saies Solomon) but con-

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sider



Ecl. 7. 8. *sider the end of it; give God leave to do his own work, and give him leave to do it his own way, and give him leave to do it in his own time, saies the Apostle, Jam. 5. 11. You have seen the end the Lord made with Job. And Psal. 37. 37. Mark the perfect man and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace. And Dent. 8. 16. He humbled thee, and proved thee, to do thee good as thy latter end. He doth not say it was to doe them good presently; but to doe them good how ever in the latter end, with this limitation therefore it must be understood, though for the present, thou maist not find it so, yet in the conclusion thou shalt find it so.*

*Again secondly, Another limitation is this, when we say that all these providences of God shall worke for good; you must not understand them singly and aparr, but taken joyntly and together, and so they will be for good: this is that which is exprest Rom. 8. 28. All things work together for good; they work together: if thou shouldest take one providence alone, by it selfe, haply thou maist*

maist find it do thee no good at all, but now put providences together, and then thou wilt find them do thee good; as one drug in an Apothecaries Shop, cannot make a wholesome medicine, but put many drugs together, and then it will do thee good: And one wheel in the Clock (you know) cannot make the Clock move, but put all the wheels together, and then it will move. *Gen. 42. 36.* *Jacob complains (saies he) Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away, all these things are against me. True, take these providences singly by themselves, and they were all against him; I but at last he had his Joseph again, and his Simeon again, and his Benjamin again, and though for the present they were all against him, yet he lost nothing in the latter end.*

Now for the Use of this Point briefly: If God in his severest dispensations intend his peoples good, we may learn then these, four lessons by way of Instruction. *Use 1.*

First, Learn to admire the infinite wisdom of God; that same

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various, curious wisdom of God the Apostles speak of, *Ephe. 3. 10.* that can bring light out of darkness; peace out of trouble; good out of evil; grace out of sin; hope out of fear; and heaven out of hell. O! the unspeakable wisdom of God; here is *Samsons* riddle now expounded, out of the eater God can bring forth meat, and out of the strong God can bring forth sweetness, out of afflictions, and the most bitter passages of providence, God can certainly bring some good to his poor Children; there is nothing so high but his providence is above it; there is nothing so low but his providence is beneath it; there is nothing of such an extent, but his providence is able to bound it; and there is nothing so confused but his providence can order it for his own glory, and his peoples good. O! admire, fear, love, and trust this great God, that can work all things for the good of his Children.

And secondly, By way of instruction, we may hence see the reason why God doth not prevent the

the afflictions of his people, and why he doth not remove them so suddenly as we would have him; it is not for want of love and affection to his people; but because he knows how to bring good to them out of their afflictions. The patient when he hath a smarting Plaster applyed to him, cries to the Chyrurgion to take it off, but he doth not take it off as soon as the patient would have him, because he knows it works for his good. Would God think you have suffered *Joseph* to have been sold into *Egypt*, to have been made a bond-slave, and to have been imprisoned there, but that he knew how by this abasement to work his advancement. And do you think God would have suffered *David*, after he had annointed him King, to be yet pursued as a partridge upon the mountains, and to be driven from one place to another, and brought to such great streights, but that he knew how to work good to him out of all these troubles.

But thirdly, By way of instructi-

on, this may let us see what a vast difference there is between the godly, and the wicked, between the condition of the one, and of the other; to the godly, all things, yea the worst things, even Gods severest providences, work together for good; but to the wicked, all things, even the best things, work together for their hurt, Spirituall good things, and temporall good things, work for their hurt.

First, All Spirituall good things work for their hurt; as for example, the mercy of God, which is one of the choicest Jewels he hath in his Cabinet, this works for the hurt of ungodly men, because it is an occasion of looseness, and libertinisme to them; the grace of God another choice Jewel, works for their hurt, for it is an occasion of wantoness, they turne the grace of God into liciviousness; the patience of God, that is an occasion of their presumption; the ordinances they are but poyson to them; their baptism will be but a witness of their perjury; the Lords Supper, will be

be but as a seal to their damnation; the word of God which to others is a savour of life unto life, unto them Ro. 9. 33. it is a savour of death unto death; nay Jesus Christ himself to a wicked man is but a stumbling stone and a rock of offence.

And as all spirituall good things, so all temporall good things likewise work for hurt to wicked men; as for example, all providences though they seem never so smiling, and successfull, do yet tend to the hurt of ungodly men, *The prosperitie of fools shall destroy them*, Pro. 1. 32. so likewise their riches shall be their ruin, their flourishing shall be their perishing; their power, their authority, their greatness, their attendance, their freinds, their full tables, all these shall be but as a curse unto their souls; God curses his own blessings unto wicked men; As God can turn curses into blessings, where his Children please him; so he can turn blessings into curses to wicked and ungodly men. Had it not been better think you for *Abishophel*, to have been a very fool rather than

Mal. 2.2.



such a great Politician as he was, for his wisdom was his ruine? Had it not been better for *Absolom* to have been a deformed creature, than so beautifull as he was, for his beauty was his ruine? Had it not been far better for him to have been a kitchen boy than a King, for his power and authoritie was his ruine? Had it not been better for *Haman* to have been the foot-stool, rather than such a great favorite in *Ahasuerus* his Court, for his favour was his ruine; God set him in a slipperie place to cast him down to destruction. In a word, all temptations shall be for their hurt; all afflictions shall be for their hurt. King *Abas* in the time of his distresse did trespass yet more against the Lord. And all examples, whether of the godly or wicked shall be for their hurt; the examples of the godly shall make them but fret and rage at them so much the more; the examples of other wicked men like themselves, shall but infect and corrupt them so much the more; death it self shall be for their hurt, death shall be

2 Chron.  
28. 22.

be as a trap-door, to let them down to the bottomless pit of hell, whence they shall never, never return. Oh! who would be in a state of unregeneracy and unbelief, in an unreformed and impenitent state, and sleep in it one houre? Who would be in the state of the wicked, when all things work for their hurt? That is the third instruction.

The fourth instruction by way of information is this; If God can make the severest of his providences to work for our good, then we have no cause to be much troubled at crosses and afflictions, at tryalls and temptations; we have no cause to sink under the burden of them, but rather to bear them patiently without fainting or fretting; for though at present we do not know how they should be for our good, yet God knows how to order them for our spirituall advantage here, and for our eternall advantage here after; You will give a Watch-maker leave to take your watch in piece, because he knows how to put it together again. So you may give God leave

to break you in your comforts, and in your own ends and designs, because God knows how to set you together again, *Hosea 6. 1. He hath broken us, and he will heal us, he hath smitten and he will bind us up.* When you come at the beginning of the year, and see a house a building, you see nothing but deformity, here a piece of timber, and there stones, and in another place rubbish; I but come at the end of the year and you shall see a beautifull fabrick. We have no cause therefore either to fret, or be disquieted at any passage of Gods Providence: In times of prosperity we should not be lifted up; and in times of adversity we should not be too much cast down; these are the four lessons by way of instruction.

*Use 2.*

Secondly, Another Use I would make of this Point is, for examination. O! let every one of us call himself to account, and see whether the providences of God in wayes of severity have wrought for our good yea, or no; hath sin been prevented, hath sin been discovered, hath it

it been imbittered, hath it been weakned, if not quite destroyed, have our grates been tryed, have they been exercis'd, have we had more faith, more patience, more meekness, more humility; have our prayers been more fervent, have our affections been more heavenly, have we got good by every one of our afflictions.

To perswade you to this tryall, I will use but this one Motive, and remember it, and take it for a rule: It is a never failing evedence, discovering a man to be in the state of grace, when he finds every condition drawing him nearer to God, for then it is a manifest sign you are in the number of those that are called, according to his purpose, and who love God, and are beloved of God; that is the second Use.

Thirdly, (and so to draw to. Use 3<sup>d</sup>. wards a conclusion) It may serve for the unspeakable consolation of all those that are good; good Figs, those that are inwardly good, that are impartially good, that are constantly good, that fear God, and that

that love God, those who are called according to his purpose. I tell you my brethren, this is that which may be a seasonable support to your spirits in sad and sinking times: this very Doctrine may be a heart-ravishing cordiall, which were it but rightly relished and digested by you, might make your very hearts dance within you for joy. O! that I were but able to convey the comfort, the sweetness of this cordiall to your hearts, and to my own; certainly if you did but seriously consider this, you would not be much troubled at any outward troubles that could befall you; no trouble would be very troublesome to you. I but saies one, alas I am slandered and reproached, I am reviled, and scorned, and am evil spoken of, yea though I have not deserved it; how can this tend to my good? yes, God can by this teach thee to live above the world, above the credit and repute of men: it may be thou didest rest too much in the applause of man, and didest triumph too much in a good name, now God will by this teach

teach thee to seek that honour that comes from him onely, and not that honour that comes from man. It was that which our Saviour laid to the charge of the Pharisees, *John 5. 44.* saies he, *How can ye believe which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God onely.* And saies our Saviour, *Mat. 5. 11, 12.* Blessed are you when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake, rejoyce and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven. It is a sweet saying of *St Austin*, That man that willingly detracts from my good name, he doth against his will adde to my Crown. All the reproches of men will make our Crown so much the heavier. O! but saies another, I am very poor; my estate and trade is gone; I lie under a great deal of poverty; I want bread for my family, &c. How can this ever tend for good? yes, it may be God by the poverty of thy estate would make thee poor in spirit, would make thee humble and base in thine own



Jam. 2. 5.

own eyes, it may be God foresees that if thou shouldest be rich thou wouldest be proud, and therefore he will keep thee poor that thou maist be humble; and 'tis better a thousand times to be poor in the world and rich in grace, than to be rich in the world and poor in grace. God chooseth the poor in the world to be rich in faith; and have other men greater estates than thou? it may be they have greater snares than thou, are they in higher places than thou? then they are in greater danger of falling than thou; the truth is, the soul can better manage a state of adversity than a state of prosperity; and when the soul is under some abasement ( pray mark it ) it is usually at a lesse distance from God.

I but I have a body troubled with many infirmities, with many diseases, pains and aches, how can this tend to my good? yes, God by this will put thee in mind of thy mortality, that thou hast a poor tottering Tabernacle, that ere long will drop into dust, and that there-  
fore

fore thou must seek for a house on high, a house prepared in heaven for thee; and have other stronger bodies than thou? it may be they have souls less weaned from the world than thou; hadst thou a healthfull body, it may be thy heart would be too much glewed to and set upon the world, and this makest thee weary of the world, so that thou longest to be with Jesus Christ, where thou shalt be freed from all these pains, and sorrows, and sufferings; mark it, look wherein we are inferiour unto others in one kind, God still makes it up in some other kind.

I but I am tempted and buffeted with Sathan, and am disquieted in mind, can this be for my good? yes, the great God of Heaven and earth can order all these temptations for thy good, as *David* saies, Psal. 118. 13. *Thou hast thrust sore at me, (speaking of Saul) that I might fall, but the Lord helped me; so though Sathan thrust sore at thee to wound thee, yet God will so order it, that he shall wound thy*  
sin,

sin, but shall not hurt thy soul.' Tis an excellent saying of Saint *Austin*; God (saies he) is so good, that he would never suffer evil to be in the world, were he not so wise that he could order all evil for the good of his own people. Nay God is so infinitely wise, that of poyson he can make an antidote against poyson: God can order the sins of his own people for their good, to make them more watchfull, and to be more humble and abased in their own eyes, and to long to be where they shall sin no more. This is not an argument for presumption, but a prop to keep us from despair. O! what a comfortable, what a blessed condition is this, that whatever the state of Gods people is, yet God can and will turn it all for their good. What tongue of man or Angel can express the consolation the soul might find in this Doctrine, were it but rightly relished, and digested.

But one Use more, and I will have done; and that is a use of exhortation; as you have heard something

thing for your comfort, so you must hear something of dutie also.

If God in the severest of his providences intend our good ; then there are four duties that I desire to propound to you, and I will but propound them, for I cannot press them, the time being gone.

1. Believe

2. Apply

3. Act according to } this truth.

4. Draw out the }  
sweetness of }

First, I would have you believe this truth; that God in all his dispensations, though they seem never so strange, and harsh to you, yet intends your spiritnall good. Believe it may some say ; what do you think we are atheists ; do you think we do not believe the Scripture, when God saies all things work for good ? I, it may be you believe it, but it is one thing to believe with a notional faith, and another thing to believe with a practicall faith. You read of the *work of faith with power.* 2 Theſ. 1. 11.

There

there are many it may be that believe this truth with a notional faith, I but few that believe it with a practi-  
call faith; for example, there are none of us but believe we are mortall, that we are poor frail creatures, that must die and drop down to the dust, we know not how soon, we believe this doctrine, with a notional faith, I but how few believe it with a practical faith, so as to prepare for their latter end, to make their whole life a preparation for their dying day; the devils they believe too, they believe that God is a holy and a just God, and will render to them according to their deserts, at that great day when they must be judged before all the Angels, and before all the Saints, I but for all this they do not repent; they have a notional faith, I but they have not a practi-  
call faith; so it may be you believe this Doctrine, but do you believe it practically, so as to make use of it, that you are able to say, certainly this providence, this affliction, though sharp, yet tendeth to my spirituall good.

But

But Secondly, As I would have you to believe this truth, so I would have you apply it unto your own souls, that when afflictions come, or troubles come, or sickness comes, when the loss of a dear husband or wife, or the loss of a hopefull child, or the loss of an estate comes, when pangs, and pains, and tears, and streights come upon you, you may say to every one of them, you are welcome, you come with your commission, do the work that God ets you about; I know that though for the present you are very painfull, yet at the last you will be very beneficiall, as I have heard the story of a boy in a Ship, when there was such a storm, that threatned the sinking of the Ship presently, he sat still, and was not at all troubled; and being asked why he was not troubled, when he saw they were in jeopardy of death every minute; O saies he, *I know my Father sits at the stern, I know my God hath the disposing of all, and he will order all for good.* And O that we could do so, this is to apply this Doctrine, and not only to believe it.

Thirdly,



Thirdly, I would have you act according to your faith; and therefore let the utmost endeavour of your souls be in this, that you may find a spirituall advantage by every passage of providence, and that every condition may draw you nearer to your God. I confess this is a hard lesson to be learnt; but yet there are these five means that may help you: I will but name them:

First, If you would act so that every condition may draw you nearer to God, you must live not by sight and sense, but by faith; for if you look upon Afflictions with an eye of sense, you will see no good in them at all; but if you look upon them with an eye of faith, then you will say sanctified Affliction is better than unsanctified prosperity; sanctified sickness better than unsanctified health; and sanctified poverty, better than unsanctified riches; For *our light affliction, (saith the Apostle) which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternall weight of Glory; How did he know this? he tels you in the*  
next

next words; *While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, &c.* 2 Cor. 4. 17, 18. as if he should say; look not with an eye of flesh, but with an eye of Faith.

And then secondly, As a great deal of faith, so a great deal of patience is required also: you must not look that the good of affliction should come presently, (as I told you in one of the limitations) *No affliction for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous, nevertheless afterwards it yeeldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby,* Heb. 12. 11. As you must exercise faith, so you must be contented to wait also.

Thirdly, There must be a great deal of self-denial too, so that you can be content to be cross of your own wills, that Gods will may be fulfilled.

Fourthly, You must resolve you will not part with your integrity, though to avoid any affliction; you must not choose iniquity rather than affliction; but you must choose  
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the greatest affliction, rather than you will commit the least sin. If you keep your integrity, than this is certain, every affliction will work for your good, and you shall find every providence will tend to your spirituall advantage in your worst condition, but on the contrary; if you part with your integrity, you shall meet with a curse in the best of your outward conditions here below.

And then in the Fifth and last place, If you would have all things work for good, you must be much in prayer, Phil. 1. 19. saies the Apostle, (speaking of afflictions) *I know that this shall turn to my salvation, through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and this is the third Duty.*

And then Fourthly, (And so I have done;) Do not onely believe, and apply, and act according to, but labour to draw out the sweetness of this truth, that you may be able to rejoyce in the time of temptation. *My brethren, count it all joy, when you fall into divers temptations, Jam.*

1.2. What to rejoyce in temptations may some say? if the Apostle had said, my brethren, count it all sorrow when you fall into divers temptations, he had said something; but count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations; yes, and the Apostle knew very well what he said, for he knew that they that sow most in tears, shall reap most of all in joy, and they that can bear afflictions and temptations, with most quiet calm and serene spirits, they shall have the blessed fruit of righteousness, though for the present they are exercised thereby, and God will do them a great deal of good, and will at length bring them to heaven, though by the gates of hell; and 'tis a great deal better to be brought to heaven by the gates of hell, than to be brought to hell by the gates of heaven; and it is better to have our hell here, than to have our hell hereafter, to have a hell of misery to all eternity: the Lord write every one of these things in our hearts, that we may be able to speak  
by

## 160 Gods great care of his good People

by experience that every one of these providences shall be for our good. And so much shall suffice for this Text, and for this time.

**F I N I S.**

**E R R A T A.**

**P**Age 10. line 15. r. *deserts us.* p. 20. l. 18. r. *bear.* p. 25. l. 7. r. *of whom.* p. 34. l. 12. r. *others.* p. 41. l. 8. r. *it self.* p. 50. l. 9. in some Copies r. *had Judah.*

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